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SUBJECT: Article By DDCI (Gates) for Washington Quarterly

The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

September 7, 1988

Ms. Linda Crowl
The Washington Quarterly
1800 K Street, N.W.
Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Ms. Crowl:

I am returning herewith both the new copy of my article and your original edited version.

I have made all my changes in red pen. All of them are minor and involve either corrections of typographical errors, responses to your questions or modest improvements in my own work.

With respect to the specific questions in your letter, also with reference to my original:

-- Pages 1 and 2: The punchiest quotes are the most recent and therefore I think they will have the greatest impact if cited from most recent to the furthest.

-- Page 3, line 3 and 4: Your edit is fine.

-- Page 7, line 19: "More analyses" is correct as you have edited.

-- Page 9, line 22: I have inserted the names of the four Presidents.

-- Page 11, line 24: Multiple reentry vehicle is correct.

-- Page 17 and 18: I believe the points listed are direct quotes but I do not have the original and so would not put anything but the final quote in quotation marks.

-- Page 27, line 14: Your correction is right.

D 21n -10

A few small points of my own, again with reference to your original edited version:

-- Page 7, line 8: This is the first time that I refer to the National Security Agency. I thought it should be spelled out with the initials then in parentheses.

-- Page 5, line 10: I have no problem striking the phrase "it is my experience" but do not believe I can state the remainder of the sentence simply as fact. I have written in on the new version "It is my impression that ...." I think I need some qualifier of this sort.

-- Page 8, last sentence of second full paragraph: I have deleted this sentence inasmuch as I believe it duplicates the last sentence of the very next paragraph.

-- Page 12, line 10 of the tick beginning "Third": I think that the quotation marks are needed around the word "discovering" inasmuch as this was a term of political attack used at the time that I think most of those familiar with the issue would recognize.

-- Page 18, line 8 of the last paragraph: I have added a three word description of the President's November 1978 note. Other than the quote at the beginning of the article there is no other reference and it seemed to me this clarification would be useful.

-- Page 27, third from the last line: "Americans" is not really the right word here inasmuch as I'm really referring to the White House and CIA. I have made a substitution so the sentence would begin "Only thus can the two institutions seize the opportunity ...."

Finally, I would ask that no advance copies of the article be sent out to journalists or anyone else until mid-November, about ten days or so before publication. If this is a problem, please let me know.

Regards,

STAT

Robert M. Gates

Enclosures:
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Volume____ Number____

Dear _____:

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I(we) concur in this letter of agreement, subject to the attached addendum.

STAT

Date	Author	Citizenship
9-7-88	[redacted]	US

Date	Author	Citizenship

The CSIS and MIT hereby acknowledge their consent to the terms of the foregoing letter of agreement: _____

Christine F. Lamb, MIT Press

Addendum to Agreement

Between

Robert M. Gates and MIT Press

With respect to paragraph three of the attached agreement, as you are aware, an earlier version of my article was published in 1978 in an internal CIA publication, Studies in Intelligence. Since this journal is an official U.S. Government publication, it does not assert in its own behalf any copyright in the articles it publishes.

With respect to paragraph four, you should be aware that I am an officer of the U.S. Government and I did prepare my article in the course of my official duties. Therefore, I do not assert any copyright in this article.

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(Robert M.) Gates
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THE WASHINGTON QUARTERLY

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Robert M. Gates is Deputy Director of Central Intelligence. He headed the analytical directorate of CIA for more than five years and served as Chairman of the National Intelligence Council. He served on the National Security Council Staff from spring 1974 until December 1979.

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An Opportunity Unfulfilled: The Use and Perceptions of Intelligence at the White House

Robert M. Gates

"Collection, processing and analysis all are directed at one goal -- producing accurate reliable intelligence.... Who are the customers who get this finished product? At the very top, of the list is the President. He is, of course, the Central Intelligence Agency's most important customer."

(CIA Information Pamphlet)

What have the CIA's most important customers had to say about how well it achieves that goal?

"I am not satisfied with the quality of our political intelligence," said Jimmy Carter in 1978.

"What the hell do those clowns do out there in Langley?" asked Richard Nixon in 1970.

"CIA Director McCone...made recommendations for checking and improving the quality of intelligence reporting. I promptly accepted the suggestions...," explained Lyndon Johnson, (Memoirs).

"During the rush of...events in the final days of 1958, the Central Intelligence Agency suggested for the first time that a Castro victory might not be in the interests of the United States," said Dwight Eisenhower, (Memoirs).

A search of Presidential memoirs and those of principal assistants over the past 30 years or so turns up remarkably little discussion or perspective on the role played by Directors of Central Intelligence (DCIs) or intelligence information in Presidential decisionmaking on foreign affairs. What little commentary there has been, as suggested by the introductory quotes, is nearly uniformly critical. Similarly, in intelligence memoir literature, although one can read a great deal about covert operations and technical achievements, one finds little on the role of intelligence in Presidential decisionmaking. Thus, on both sides of the relationship there is a curious, discreet silence.

Why this dearth of first-hand reflection and evaluation in a major area of foreign affairs and national security history? Partly, perhaps, it is because ~~even~~ are still ~~there is a~~ reluctance to discuss what both parties perceive as sensitive information. Partly, it may be because senior officials ~~find~~ have difficulty distinguishing what they learn or see in intelligence reports from other sources of information, ambiguities in the role of intelligence in policymaking, confusion over what is intelligence, the inclination of senior officials to believe they already knew what they just read in an intelligence report, and the common predilection of senior officials to rely on and recall personal contacts as opposed to the written word or anonymous experts.

~~I believe, however, that~~ this void in the study of presidents, intelligence and decisionmaking -- apart from covert action -- is also explained by factors that continue to dominate the relationship between presidents and the CIA and intelligence community: intelligence collection and assessment are black arts for most presidents and their key advisers, neither adequately understood nor adequately exploited. For intelligence officers, presidential and senior level views of the intelligence they receive and how they use it (or not) are just as unfamiliar, giving rise among intelligence officers to wishful thinking and even conceit. In short, over the years, both the White House and the CIA have

~~SETTING THE SCENE~~

To understand how intelligence is used and regarded at the White House first requires an understanding of the context in which it is received. The sheer volume of information flowing to the President is staggering. More than 200 agencies seek to draw his attention to programs, proposals, or vital pieces of information. An astonishing amount of their work finds its way to the White House.

Policy agencies such as State, Defense, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and others prepare and send great quantities of paperwork to the President. Most Presidents also get considerable information and analysis on foreign affairs from the media. These sources of information join a river of correspondence to the President from countless consultants, academics, think tanks, political contacts, family and friends, political supporters, journalists, authors, foreign leaders, and concerned citizens. (Lest you think such correspondence can easily be disregarded, ~~it is my experience~~ that most Presidents often attach as much -- if not more -- credibility to the views of family, friends, and private contacts as they do to those of executive agencies.) In sum, despite the mystique of intelligence for the public, for most Presidents it is just one of a number of sources of information. Intelligence

reporting must compete for the President's time and attention, and that competition is intense.

It is the responsibility of the White House Staff, including the National Security Council (NSC) Staff, to impose order on this avalanche of paper and to reduce it to manageable proportions. The NSC alone processes some 10,000 "action" papers a year -- not including intelligence analyses or other purely "informational" papers. Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's National Security Adviser, once asked me to calculate how many pages of reading he sent to President Carter weekly; the total averaged many hundreds of pages -- ~~and among~~ despite White House offices the NSC was being among the most disciplined with respect to the length and number of items going to the President. These, then, are the first hurdles that intelligence faces: a President with a heavy schedule, inundated by paper and demands for decisions, surrounded by senior assistants who have as a main role trying to keep that President from being overwhelmed by paper, and a President with vast and varied non-intelligence sources upon which he also relies and in which he often has considerable confidence.

$h4(R)

~~WHAT INTELLIGENCE DOES THE PRESIDENT GET~~ Receive (OR)

The President routinely receives only one intelligence document that is not summarized or commented upon by someone

outside the Intelligence Community. The President's Daily Brief -- CIA's principal vehicle for reporting and analyzing current developments for the President. He receives this, usually via his National Security Adviser every morning, along with a package that has varied little from President to President: a few (3-6) ~~State~~ and CIA cables of special significance; occasionally a sensitive intelligence report from the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, or the ~~National Security Agency~~; selected wire service items; ~~State~~ or CIA situation reports (rarely both) if there is a crisis abroad; and often NSC and ~~State~~ morning cable summaries. Contrary to what is commonly believed, this is the only regularly scheduled package of current intelligence the President receives during the day.

Through the course of the day, however, the National Security Adviser keeps the President apprised of significant developments overseas and may hand carry especially important cables directly to the President. In a crisis, the flow of information increases. More analysis and reports will be given the President. He will receive current intelligence orally in meetings with his senior White House, ~~State~~, ~~Defense~~, and intelligence advisers, as well as from the media -- often the first source of information. Nevertheless, on a day-to-day basis, apart from the PDB, successive Presidents generally have seen only that current intelligence selected by the National

Security Adviser, who works to make that morning package as succinct and small as he responsibly can.

It was not always this way, even in modern times. Before the Kennedy Administration, the President, his National Security Adviser and the NSC Staff relied on the CIA and ~~State~~ DoS to provide incoming cables and information as soon as they were processed. It was an approach that led to considerable competition, and redundancy and placed a President at the mercy of the bureaucracies for information.

This system was revolutionized, however, when President Kennedy created the White House Situation Room to which ~~State~~ DoS, the ~~National Security Agency~~ NSA, ~~the Defense Department~~ DoD, and the CIA began to provide unevaluated or "raw" intelligence information electronically -- an approach with its own readily apparent shortcomings. (Many a time, an overeager White House aide has run to a President with a dramatic but unevaluated intelligence report, and later sheepishly had to return to acknowledge the source was poor or there had been a mistake.) Thus, the NSC and President began receiving intelligence and diplomatic cables on developments abroad often as soon as, and often before, ~~State~~ DoS desk officers and intelligence analysts.

One result of the establishment of the Situation Room was a significant diminution in the value to the White House of the CIA's

and other agencies' current intelligence reporting that to this day has not been fully grasped by the Intelligence Community. Only analysis by experienced intelligence specialists lends value to current intelligence reporting provided the White House. Even so, because of the Situation Room, intelligence information from abroad is sometimes in the President's hands before reaching the DCI, other senior intelligence officials, senior policy officials -- and the experts.

Naturally, the President receives information through channels other than the early morning folder and the occasional cable during the day. For example, most Presidents routinely have received current intelligence reports in meetings and the key judgments of important National Intelligence Estimates (and other intelligence as well) either directly from the DCI or through the National Security Adviser. All DCIs also have briefed the President and his senior advisers both individually and in formal meetings of the National Security Council. Moreover, discussion at such meetings serves to convey information to the President from diverse sources. The President also receives abbreviated versions of intelligence assessments in many policy papers.

Nevertheless, each of the four Presidents ~~I have~~ that this author has observed -- who? -- has received a infinitesimal part of published intelligence and only a fraction even of analysis specifically prepared for

senior policymakers. This has placed a premium on the President's Daily Brief, on the willingness and ability of the DCI to give important assessments (published or oral) directly to the President, and on the willingness of the National Security Adviser to forward key intelligence reports to the President. Disinterest or reluctance on the part of a DCI (or National Security Adviser) to take an activist, even aggressive role in this respect is a severe -- even irreparable -- handicap to ensuring that intelligence information and assessments reach the President.

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WHAT PRESIDENTS ~~THINK OF~~ WHAT THEY ~~GET~~ Receive (2R)

Perhaps in recognition of how busy Presidents are, for years there has been an adage at the White House that the absence of criticism should be regarded as praise. Along these lines, Presidential comments on intelligence assessments are so rare that ~~we are~~ one is understandably tempted to assume satisfaction with what is being received. Regrettably, however, this is doubtful. Many of the infrequent comments are critical, as illustrated at the outset of this article.

~~I believe~~ the negative perceptions of Intelligence of most Presidents and their senior advisers while in office or afterward are due to several factors.

(no 4)

The first and most significant is failure. Whether Nixon's unhappiness over poor misestimates of planned Soviet ~~ICBM~~ intercontinental ballistic missile deployments or Carter's over failure to forecast the Iranian revolution or untimely upward revisions of North Korean troop strength, these Presidents and their advisers -- with justification -- believed CIA assessments either contributed importantly to policy disasters or made them vulnerable to later criticism. Moreover, Presidents expect that, for what they spend on intelligence, the ~~end~~ product should be able to predict coups, upheavals, riots, intentions, military moves, and the like with accuracy. ~~And~~ [Further,] in the early morning hours when the National Security Adviser must repair to the President's study with the (usually) bad news about such events, the Chief Executive will not unnaturally wonder why his billions for intelligence do not spare him unpleasant surprises.

Second, Presidents do not like controversy within the Executive Branch, and they like it even less when it becomes public. Nor do Presidents welcome debate over basic facts once they have made a decision. Whether the issue is troublesome assessments on Vietnam (Johnson), the public dispute between the CIA and DoD ~~Defense~~ over whether the SS-9 was a MRV or ~~MIRV~~ (Nixon),

multiple independently targeted reentry vehicle

North Korean force levels (Carter), or the Soviet gas pipeline (Reagan), these and other intelligence debates over technology transfer, verification of arms control, Soviet defense spending, Soviet weapons programs, and many more have caused controversy and weakened support for policy. To the extent intelligence information results (in the eyes of White House officials) in internal government controversy, problems with the Congress, or embarrassing publicity, it will draw Presidential ire or, at a minimum, leave the President with unflattering views of his intelligence services.

Third, Presidents do not welcome new intelligence assessments undercutting policies based on earlier assessments. As professionals, we are constantly revisiting important subjects as better and later information or improved analytical tools become available. When this revisitation results in changing the statistical basis for the US position in ~~MBFR~~ the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks, substantially elevating estimates of North Korean forces ~~at a time~~ when the President is pressing to reduce US forces in South Korea, or "discovering" a Soviet brigade in Cuba, it is no revelation to observe that Presidents regard us, thus professionals, less than fondly.

Fourth, successive Administrations have generally regarded with skepticism the growing direct relationship between Congress and US intelligence agencies. In recent years, the provision of great quantities of highly sensitive information and analysis to Members of Congress and their staffs has largely eliminated the Executive's longstanding advantage of a near monopoly of information on foreign affairs and defense. The flow of information to the Hill has given the Congress a powerful tool in its search for a greater voice in the making of foreign and defense policy vis-a-vis the Executive and Presidents cannot be indifferent to the fact that intelligence has provided Congress with that tool and that the White House is nearly helpless to blunt it except in very rare cases.

Fifth, I believe Presidents and their national security teams usually are ill-informed about intelligence capabilities; and therefore, often have unrealistic expectations of what intelligence can do for them, especially when they hear about the genuinely extraordinary capabilities of US intelligence for collecting and processing information. When they too soon learn of our limitations, they are inevitably

disappointed. Policymakers usually learn the hard way that, ~~while~~ although intelligence can tell them a great deal, it only rarely -- and usually in crises involving military forces -- provides the kind of unambiguous and timely information that can make day-to-day decisionmaking simpler and less risky. Intelligence officers occasionally encourage such exaggerated expectations by pretending a confidence in their judgments they cannot reasonably justify and by failing to be candid about the quality and reliability of their information and the possibility of other outcomes. Once bitten by an erroneous or misleading intelligence assessment, most White House officials -- including Presidents -- will be twice-shy about relying on or accepting unquestioningly a ~~second~~ another.

Finally, beyond these broad factors affecting the White House-Intelligence Community relationship are narrower, more parochial bureaucratic stresses. Often, staff at the White House do not know how to use effectively the vast system they direct -- and, too often, an intelligence bureaucracy that does not want "outside" direction offers little help. There is a longstanding perception at the White House that changing the way the intelligence bureaucracies do business -- for example, even the presentation of intelligence information to

the President -- is just too hard, takes too much time and energy, and ultimately yields little.

A useful case study illustrating the simultaneous contribution of intelligence to Presidential policymaking and the problems it can bring, is the ratification proceedings of the Treaty on Intermediate Nuclear Forces. The capabilities of US intelligence to monitor deployed Soviet INF weapons and associated treaty provisions, made the treaty possible in the first place. However, our uncertainties in some areas relating to the Treaty, disagreements within the intelligence community on the number of non-deployed INF missiles, public disclosure of these disagreements, and exploitation of them in the Senate's ratification proceedings, all presented problems to Executive policymakers. For the White House, on this issue -- as so many others -- intelligence was a bittersweet player.

Presidents and other principals over the years have faulted the CIA for lack of imagination in anticipating the needs of the President and for insufficient aggressiveness in keeping itself informed on policy issues under consideration. Neither Presidents nor their Assistants for National Security Affairs have felt it their responsibility regularly to keep senior Agency officials well informed in this regard, to provide day-to-day detailed tasking, or to provide helpful feedback. For guidance, the CIA thus often has had to rely on what the

DCI can pick up in high-level meetings and contacts -- and the skill and interest of different DCIs in this has varied greatly. Indeed, some DCIs have neither sought nor wanted guidance or feedback from the White House, or have sought it on some issues and resisted it on others.

Irregular feedback and intelligence policy guidance -- or the lack of any at all -- in the four Administrations that ~~I~~ this author have observed ~~first hand~~ has been an obstacle to improved and more responsive intelligence performance. The lack of receptivity on the part of senior intelligence officials on those infrequent occasions when guidance or advice has been offered is equally to blame. Even so, if Executive Branch and especially White House officials view Congressional influence on intelligence strategy, priorities, and investment as excessive, it is in part because senior policymakers in successive administrations have neglected their own responsibilities in these areas.

~~WHAT IS TO BE DONE?~~

A President and his national security team (the Vice President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, and the National Security Adviser) should view intelligence as an important asset in foreign policymaking and should be prepared to devote the time and energy to working with the DCI to provide useful

guidance and direction to the collection and analysis efforts of CIA and the rest of US intelligence. Contrary to the view of those who are apprehensive over a close relationship between policymakers and intelligence, I believe it is not close enough -- that more interaction, feedback, and direction as to strategy, priorities, and requirements is critical to better performance, and that this can be accomplished without jeopardizing the independence and integrity of intelligence assessments and judgments.

There has been progress in the last ten years, though much more can be done. The Carter and Reagan administrations have worked constructively at a high level to inform CIA of the analytical needs of the President and to advise the Agency of perceived shortcomings in collection and analysis.

In 1978, Dr. Brzezinski sent a memorandum to then DCI Turner that made the following points:

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c. Greater attention needs to be paid to clandestine collection targeted on the thinking and planning of key leaders or groups in important advanced and secondary countries, how they make policy decisions and how they will react to US decisions and those of other powers.

- Political analyses should be focused more on problems of particular concern to the US government. Too many papers are on subjects peripheral to US interests or offer broad overviews not directly linked to particular problems, events or developments of concern to the US government.

- There needs to be greater attention to the future. More papers are needed that briefly set forth facts and evidence and then conclude with a well-informed speculative essay on the implications for the future: "We expect and hope for thought-provoking, reasonable views of the future based on what you know about the past and present.... Analysts should not be timorous or bound by convention."

After the Iranian Revolution, the Carter White House took other steps to ensure better communication of intelligence needs. A Political Intelligence Working Group (the Deputy National Security Adviser, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, and later the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy) was established at the White House to organize remedial action in response to the President's November 1978 note. The group interpreted its charter broadly and worked to improve and

better focus field reporting by State, CIA and Attaches; to resolve bureaucratic impediments to good reporting; and to tackle other problems in order to improve collection and analysis and make intelligence more responsive. As part of the work of this informal group, senior staff representatives of Dr. Brzezinski met weekly with representatives of the Secretary of State and the DCI to review foreign developments or issues of current concern to the President and to provide feedback on intelligence coverage. These efforts had a salutary effect in improving communication between the Intelligence Community and the White House and improved intelligence support to the President.

A major innovation of the Reagan Administration in this regard was the President's decision in 1981 that his President's Daily Brief should be provided each day also to the Vice President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, the National Security Adviser and later the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They all were to have the same information as the President. Most significantly, primarily for security reasons, the PDB was to be delivered to these principals in person by a senior analytical officer of the CIA, who would sit with the principal and then carry the document back to the CIA. These arrangements provided an opportunity unique in US intelligence history for intelligence professionals to get immediate, informed feedback from principals -- their follow-up

questions, tasking for further collection and analysis, and a sense of the priorities and concerns of the top officials in the government. Intelligence support was thereby improved as was the understanding of intelligence officers of policy dynamics and reality of the decisionmaking arena which they were supporting.

The day to day dialogue between intelligence officers and policymakers at all levels has increased significantly in recent years. Intelligence officers have been more aggressive in this regard and policymakers more receptive. Routine weekly meetings between the DCI and, separately, the Secretaries of State and Defense and the National Security Adviser have contributed to improved relevance and timeliness of intelligence support. The NSC Staff and several Reagan NSC advisers worked with intelligence managers to improve responsiveness to Presidential intelligence needs and to remedy shortcomings in intelligence support. With Reagan's encouragement of the President's his Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board studied substantive and bureaucratic problems in the Intelligence Community and offered recommendations for improvement.

In sum, the dialogue essential to better intelligence support has improved, but such progress is highly perishable with frequent turnover in senior policy officials. Moreover,

this improved dialogue until recently focused primarily on current intelligence or crisis-related subjects. Much remains to be done in institutionalizing improved White House intelligence guidance policy, attention to requirements, investment, and dialogue on strategy and longer-range issues.

~~OVERCOMING WHITE HOUSE SUSPICION AND CIA ISOLATION~~

Presidents expect their intelligence service to provide timely, accurate and farseeing information and analysis. Thus, nearly all Presidential comments on the quality of intelligence are critical -- prompted by ~~our~~ the CIA's failure to meet expectations. Indeed, all but one quote at the outset of this article was in response to a specific situation where intelligence was perceived to have failed to measure up. In short, Presidents often consider intelligence as much another problem bureaucracy as a source of helpful information, insight and support.

This point is perhaps most graphically illustrated by a story involving President Johnson. Former DCI Richard Helms recounts a private dinner in the White House family quarters during which President Johnson engaged John J. McCloy in a discussion about intelligence. He told McCloy things were going well in intelligence, but then continued: "Let me tell you about these intelligence guys. When I was growing up in

Texas, we had a cow named Bessie. I'd go out early and milk her. I'd get her in the stanchion, seat myself and squeeze out a pail of fresh milk. One day I'd worked hard and gotten a full pail of milk, but I wasn't paying attention, and old Bessie swept her shit-smeared tail through that bucket of milk. Now, you know, that's what these intelligence guys do. You work hard and get a good program or policy going, and they sweep a shit-smeared tail through it."

The dynamics of the relationship between the White House and CIA and the lack of understanding of each other's perspective and motives are usually difficult for the players themselves to discern. They are even less clear to outside observers. ~~While~~ Although most journalists and academicians focus on alleged distortions of intelligence to support policy, the players know that the relationship actually is often characterized by disagreement on substance and suspicion of motives. To the extent intelligence professionals are isolated (or isolate themselves) from White House/NSC officials and are unresponsive to White House informational requirements or suggestions on strategy, this adversarial nature of the relationship will be emphasized.

Although the routine order of business and internal organization may vary from Administration to Administration, there are ways to improve this relationship and intelligence

support to the President. None is new. Efforts have been made to carry out most of the suggestions but they have been haphazard, transitory or obstructed by bureaucratic, cultural or attitudinal problems. This must change.

The DCI and his senior managers and the President and his staff must both promote and maintain close personal ties at all levels. Both must aggressively seek new ways to get intelligence officers in on policy initiatives under consideration or underway to figure out how intelligence can make a contribution, and how best to get intelligence information and assessments before the President. There should be closer contact on questions of long-term intelligence strategy, investment and performance.

The role of the DCI is central to understanding the President's needs and conveying analysis to him. DCI aggressiveness in getting substantive matters before the President (and DCI access to the President) has varied greatly, though. The DCI should work closely with the National Security Adviser -- perhaps the best source of information on issues of topical interest to the President and the foreign affairs and defense agenda. Finally, the importance of feedback from the President and his national security team is critical.

Contrary to the views of some, we cannot properly do our work in splendid isolation -- and should not. Timeliness, relevance and objectivity are not incompatible.

The responsibility for making intelligence more relevant, timely and helpful is not that of the DCI and senior officials of the intelligence community alone. The President and his senior national security team must take seriously their responsibility for the quality of intelligence support they get. They must be willing to make time for regular dialogue as to their intelligence requirements and for understanding intelligence capabilities, the impact of competing priorities for collection and analysis, and major investment decisions. They must be willing to play an active role in guiding intelligence strategy and determining priorities.

The above "suggestions" apply to improving the quality and usefulness of intelligence to the President. They will not resolve the several causes of Presidential displeasure -- intelligence support to Congress, revised assessments that have policy implications, surprises, and politically disagreeable assessments. Even here mitigating steps can and have been taken. More can be done. ~~For example:~~

Intelligence professionals should take the initiative to let the National Security Adviser, the NSC Staff, or a Cabinet officer know when an estimate or other form of analysis will revise earlier assessments and have a significant impact on the President's policies. This would include, in particular, advance warning of new and important conclusions in military estimates. There is, of course, a risk that someone will try to change or stop publication of an unwelcome or embarrassing estimate. Here the DCI must and, this author is confident, will, stand his ground to protect the integrity of the assessment and the process.

Intelligence needs to develop a mechanism for better informing the White House about support provided to the Congress. The intelligence agencies are part of the Executive Branch; the DCI is appointed by and reports to the President. It is not improper or inappropriate for the Intelligence Community to keep the President's foreign affairs and Congressional affairs staff ~~more fully~~ completely and regularly advised of papers provided to the Congress, as well as possibly controversial testimony or briefings. Keeping the Executive informed about CIA dealings with Congress is an important aspect of building Presidential confidence that ~~we are~~ the CIA is not

trying to undercut him or his policies when responding to legitimate Congressional requests.

Finally, ground rules should be developed for the disclosure of declassified intelligence. The current lack of a systematic approach contributes to leaks; to White House suspicion of obstructionism, bureaucratic games, or pursuit of a contrary policy agenda by intelligence professionals; and concern on the part of intelligence officers over the appearance (and sometimes the reality) of politicization of intelligence by White House or other policymaker-directed declassification of information. This is not a new problem, but it has worsened over the years. Many in the Executive Branch and Congress agree that intelligence information undergirding major policy decisions must often be made available for public education or to gain support for national security decisions. There is widespread demand for unclassified publication of intelligence assessments or research on issues of moment to the country. But who should make these decisions? This is not the place to propose solutions, but the problem exists and it seriously affects the relationship between the President and the intelligence agencies on the one hand and the Executive and Legislative Branches on the other.

The usefulness of the CIA to Presidents in that area for which the CIA was primarily established -- collection, reporting, analysis, and production of information -- at times has suffered because of self-imposed isolation by CIA and the lack of sustained interest, understanding, and involvement by a President and his national security team. Lack of White House involvement at times has left intelligence professionals adrift amid conflicting priorities and requirements, with the inevitable price in relevance and timeliness.

CIA and the other US intelligence agencies represent an extraordinary national asset. The rebuilding of the Intelligence Community over the past decade has vastly augmented our collection and analysis capabilities and sharpened our skills. Congress has greatly enhanced its understanding of intelligence and shown a willingness -- even determination -- to provide guidance and direction, as well as funding. I believe the White House should assert more aggressively its proper intelligence policy direction and guidance role, and that CIA should welcome this role. Only thus can we seize the opportunity further to improve intelligence support to the President and, concomitantly, better serve the policymaking process.

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Winter 1989

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Robert M. Gates@Opportunity Unfulfilled

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An Opportunity Unfulfilled: The Use and Perceptions of Intelligence at the White House

Robert M. Gates

"COLLECTION, PROCESSING AND analysis all are directed at one goal--producing accurate reliable intelligence....Who are the customers who get this finished product? At the very top of the list is the President. He is, of course, the Central Intelligence Agency's most important customer." (CIA Information Pamphlet) What have the CIA'S most important customers had to say about how well it achieves that goal? "I am not satisfied with the quality of our political intelligence," said Jimmy Carter in 1978. "What the hell do those clowns do out there in Langely?" asked Richard M. Nixon in 1970. "CIA Director McCone...made recommendations for checking and improving the quality of intelligence reporting. I promptly accepted the suggestions...," explained Lyndon B. Johnson (Memoirs).

"During the rush of...events in the final days of 1958, the

Central Intelligence Agency suggested for the first time that a Castro victory might not be in the interests of the United States," said Dwight D. Eisenhower (Memoirs).

A search of presidential memoirs and those of principal assistants over the past 30 years or so turns up remarkably little discussion or perspective on the role played by directors of central intelligence (DCIs) or intelligence information in presidential decision making on foreign affairs. What little commentary there has been, as suggested by the introductory quotes, is nearly uniformly critical. Similarly, in intelligence memoir literature, although one can read a great deal about covert operations and technical achievements, one finds little on the role of intelligence in presidential decision making. Thus, on both sides of the relationship there is a curious, discreet silence.

Why this dearth of firsthand reflection and evaluation in a major area of foreign affairs and national security history? Partly, perhaps, it is because both parties are still reluctant to discuss what they perceive as sensitive information. Partly, it may be because senior officials have difficulty distinguishing what they learn or see in intelligence reports from other sources of information, ambiguities in the role of intelligence in policy-making, confusion over what is intelligence, the inclination of senior officials to believe they already knew what they just read in an intelligence report, and the common predilection of senior officials to rely on and recall personal

contacts as opposed to the written word or anonymous experts.

This void in the study of presidents, intelligence, and decision making--apart from covert action--is also explained by factors that continue to dominate the relationship between presidents and the CIA and the intelligence community: intelligence collection and assessment are black arts for most presidents and their key advisers, neither adequately understood nor adequately exploited. For intelligence officers, presidential and senior level views of the intelligence they receive and how they use it (or not) are just as unfamiliar, giving rise among intelligence officers to wishful thinking and even conceit. In short, over the years, both the White House and the CIA have failed to maximize the opportunity for better intelligence support for the president and decision making.* This situation is not peculiar to any single Administration or particular view of the CIA, but rather is a problem of personal relationships, bureaucratic cultures, and the policy process itself.

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Setting the Scene

To understand how intelligence is used and regarded at the White House first requires an understanding of the context in which it is received. The sheer volume of information flowing to the president is staggering. More than 200 agencies seek to draw his attention to programs, proposals, or vital pieces of information. An astonishing amount of their work finds its way to the White

House.

Policy agencies such as the Department of State (DoS), the Department of Defense (DoD), the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and others prepare and send great quantities of paperwork to the president. Most presidents also receive considerable information and analysis on foreign affairs from the media. These sources of information join a river of correspondence to the president from countless consultants, academics, think tanks, political contacts, family, friends, political supporters, journalists, authors, foreign leaders, and concerned citizens. (Lest one thinks such correspondence can easily be disregarded, it is my impression that most presidents often attach as much--if not more--credibility to the views of family, friends, and private contacts as they do to those of executive agencies.) In sum, despite the mystique of intelligence for the public, for most presidents it is just one of a number of sources of information. Intelligence reporting must compete for the president's time and attention, and that competition is intense.

It is the responsibility of the White House staff, including the National Security Council (NSC) staff, to impose order on this avalanche of paper and to reduce it to manageable proportions. The NSC alone processes some 10,000 "action" papers a year--not including intelligence analyses or other purely "informational" papers. Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, president Carter's national security adviser, once asked this author to calculate how many pages of reading material he sent to president Carter weekly. The total averaged many hundreds of pages--

despite the NSC being among the most disciplined of White House offices with respect to the length and number of items going to the president. These, then, are the first hurdles that intelligence faces: a president with a heavy schedule, inundated by paper and demands for decisions, surrounded by senior assistants who have as a main role trying to keep that president from being overwhelmed by paper, and a president with vast and varied nonintelligence sources on which he also relies and in which he often has considerable confidence.

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What Intelligence Does the President Receive?

The president routinely receives only one intelligence document that is not summarized or commented upon by someone outside the intelligence community: the President's Daily Brief (PDB). This is the CIA's principal vehicle for reporting and analyzing current developments for the president. He receives this, usually via his national security adviser every morning, along with a package that has varied little from president to president: a few (3 - 6) DoS and CIA cables of special significance; occasionally a sensitive intelligence report from the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, or the NSA; selected wire service items; DoS or CIA situation reports (rarely both) if there is a crisis abroad; and often NSC and DoS morning cable summaries. Contrary to what is commonly believed, this is the only regularly scheduled package of current intelligence the president receives during the day.

Through the course of the day, however, the national security adviser keeps the president apprised of significant developments overseas and may hand carry especially important cables directly to the president. In a crisis, the flow of information increases. More analyses and reports will be given the president. He will receive current intelligence orally in meetings with his senior White House, DoS, DoD, and intelligence advisers, as well as from the media--which is often the first source of information. Nevertheless, on a day-to-day basis, apart from the PDB, successive presidents generally have seen only that current intelligence selected by the national security adviser, who works to make that morning package as succinct as he responsibly can.

It was not always this way, even in modern times. Before the Kennedy administration, the president, his national security adviser, and the NSC staff relied on the CIA and DoS to provide incoming cables and information as soon as they were processed. It was an approach that led to considerable competition and redundancy and placed a president at the mercy of the bureaucracies for information.

This system was revolutionized, however, when president Kennedy created the White House Situation Room to which DoS, the NSA, DoD, and the CIA began to provide unevaluated or raw intelligence information electronically--an approach with its own readily apparent shortcomings. (Many a time, an overeager White House aide has run to a president with a dramatic but unevaluated intelligence report and later sheepishly had to return to

acknowledge the source was poor or there had been a mistake.) ~~[Thus, the NSC and president began receiving intelligence and diplomatic cables on developments abroad as soon as, and often before, DoS desk officers and intelligence analysts.]~~

One result of the establishment of the Situation Room was a significant diminution in the value to the White House of the CIA's and other agencies' current intelligence reporting that to this day the intelligence community has not fully grasped. Only analysis by experienced intelligence specialists lends value to current intelligence reporting provided the White House. Even so, because of the Situation Room, intelligence information from abroad is sometimes in the president's hands before reaching the DCI, other senior intelligence officials, senior policy officials--and the experts.

Naturally, the president receives information through channels other than the early morning folder and the occasional cable during the day. For example, most presidents routinely have received current intelligence reports in meetings and the key judgments of important National Intelligence Estimates (and other intelligence as well) either directly from the DCI or through the national security adviser. All DCIs also have briefed the president and his senior advisers both individually and in formal meetings of the National Security Council. Moreover, discussion at such meetings serves to convey information to the president from diverse sources. The president also receives abbreviated versions of intelligence assessments in many policy papers.

Nevertheless, each of the four presidents that this author (--Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan--) has observed--who??--has received an infinitesimal part of published intelligence and only a fraction even of analysis specifically prepared for senior policymakers. This has placed a premium on the President's Daily Brief, on the willingness and ability of the DCI to give important assessments (published or oral) directly to the president, and on the willingness of the national security adviser to forward key intelligence reports to the president. Disinterest or reluctance on the part of a DCI (or National Security Adviser) to take an activist, even aggressive role in this respect is a severe--even irreparable--handicap to ensuring that intelligence information and assessments reach the president.

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What Presidents Think of What They Receive

Perhaps in recognition of how busy presidents are, for years there has been an adage at the White House that the absence of criticism should be regarded as praise. Along these lines, presidential comments on intelligence assessments are so rare that one is understandably tempted to assume satisfaction with what is being received. Regrettably, however, this is doubtful. Many of the infrequent comments are critical, as illustrated at the outset of this article.

The negative perceptions of intelligence of most presidents and their senior advisers while in office or afterward are due to several factors. The first and most significant is failure.

Whether Nixon's unhappiness over poor estimates of planned Soviet intercontinental-ballistic-missile deployments or Carter's over failure to forecast the Iranian revolution or untimely upward revisions of North Korean troop strength, these presidents and their advisers--with some justification--believed CIA assessments either contributed importantly to policy disasters or made them vulnerable to later criticism. Moreover, presidents expect that, for what they spend of intelligence, the product should be able to predict coups, upheavals, riots, intentions, military moves, and the like with accuracy. ~~Further~~ In the early morning hours when the national security adviser must repair to the president's study with the usually bad news about such events, the chief executive will not unnaturally wonder why his billions for intelligence do not spare him unpleasant surprise.

Second, presidents do not like controversy within the executive branch, and they like it even less when it becomes public. Nor do presidents welcome debate over basic facts once they have made a decision. Whether the issue is troublesome assessments on Vietnam (Johnson), the public dispute between the CIA and DoD over whether the SS - 9 ~~was~~ had a multiple reentry vehicle or multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles (Nixon), North Korean force levels (Carter), or the Soviet gas pipeline (Reagan), these and other intelligence debates over technology transfer, arms control verification, Soviet ~~defense~~ military spending, Soviet weapons programs, and many more have caused controversy and weakened support for policy. To the extent intelligence information results (in the eyes of the White House

officials) in internal government controversy, problems with the Congress, or embarrassing publicity, it will draw presidential ire or, at a minimum, leave the president with unflattering views of his intelligence services.

Third, presidents do not welcome new intelligence assessments undercutting policies based on earlier assessments. Professionals constantly revisit important subjects as better and later information or improved analytical tools become available. When this revisitation results in changing the statistical basis for the U.S. position in the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks, substantially elevating estimates of North Korean forces as the president is pressing to reduce U.S. forces in South Korea, or "discovering" a Soviet brigade in Cuba, it is no revelation to observe that presidents regard those professionals less than fondly.

Fourth, successive administrations have generally regarded with skepticism the growing direct relationship between Congress and U.S. intelligence agencies. In recent years, the provision of great quantities of highly sensitive information and analysis to members of Congress and their staffs has largely eliminated the executive's long-standing advantage of a near monopoly of information on foreign affairs and defense. The flow of information to the Hill has given the Congress a powerful tool in its search for a greater voice in the making of foreign and defense policy vis-[illegible]a-vis the executive. Presidents cannot be indifferent to the fact that intelligence has provided Congress with that tool and that the White House is nearly helpless to

blunt it except in very rare cases.

Fifth, presidents and their national security teams usually are ill informed about intelligence capabilities; therefore, they often have unrealistic expectations of what intelligence can do for them, especially when they hear about the genuinely extraordinary capabilities of U.S. intelligence for collecting and processing information. When they too soon learn of the CIA's limitations, they are inevitably disappointed. Policymakers usually learn the hard way that, although intelligence can tell them a great deal, it only rarely--and usually in crises involving military forces--provides the kind of unambiguous and timely information that can make day-to-day decision~~-making~~s simpler and less risky. Intelligence officers occasionally encourage such exaggerated expectations by pretending a confidence in their judgments they cannot reasonably justify and by failing to be candid about the quality and reliability of their information and the possibility of other outcomes. Once bitten by an erroneous or misleading intelligence assessment, most White House officials--including presidents--will be twice shy about relying on or accepting unquestioningly another.

Finally, beyond these broad factors affecting the white House - intelligence community relationship are narrower, more parochial bureaucratic stresses. Often, staff at the White House do not know how to use effectively the vast system they direct. Too often, an intelligence bureaucracy that does not want outside direction offers little help. There is a long-standing

perception at the White House that changing the way the intelligence bureaucracies do business--for example, even the presentation of intelligence information to the president--is just too hard, takes too much time and energy, and ultimately yields little.

A useful case study illustrating the simultaneous contribution of intelligence to presidential policy-making and the problems it can bring is the ratification proceedings of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The capabilities of U.S. intelligence to monitor deployed Soviet INF weapons and associated treaty provisions made the treaty possible in the first place. However, ~~the CIA's~~ uncertainties in some areas relating to the treaty, disagreements within the intelligence community on the number of nondeployed INF missiles, public disclosure of these disagreements, and exploitation of them in the Senate's ratification proceedings all presented problems to executive policymakers. For the White House, on this issue--as so many others--intelligence was a bittersweet player.

Presidents and other principals over the years have faulted the CIA for lack of imagination in anticipating the needs of the president and for insufficient aggressiveness in keeping itself informed on policy issues under consideration. Neither presidents nor their assistants for national security affairs have felt it their responsibility regularly to keep senior agency officials well informed in this regard, to provide day-to-day detailed tasking, or to provide helpful feedback. For guidance, the CIA thus often has had to rely on what the DCI can pick up in

high-level meetings and contacts. The skill and interest of different DCIs in this has varied greatly. Indeed, some DCIs have neither sought nor wanted guidance or feedback from the White House or have sought it on some issues and resisted it on others.

Irregular feedback and intelligence policy guidance--or the lack of any at all--in the four administrations that this author has observed has been an obstacle to improved and more responsive intelligence performance. The lack of receptivity on the part of senior intelligence officials on those infrequent occasions when guidance or advice has been offered is equally to blame. Even so, if executive branch and especially White House officials view congressional influence on intelligence strategy, priorities, and investment as excessive, it is in part because senior policy makers in successive administrations have neglected their own responsibilities in these areas.

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What Is To Be Done?

A president and his national security team (the vice president, the secretaries of state and defense, and the national security adviser) should view intelligence as an important asset in foreign-policy making and should be prepared to devote the time and energy to working with the DCI to provide useful guidance and direction to the collection and analysis efforts of CIA and the rest of U.S. intelligence. Contrary to the view of those who are apprehensive over a close relationship between policymakers and

intelligence, it is not close enough. More interaction, feedback, and direction as to strategy, priorities, and requirements is critical to better performance. This can be accomplished without jeopardizing the independence and integrity of intelligence assessments and judgments.

There has been progress in the last 10 years, though much more can be done. The Carter and Reagan administrations have worked constructively at a high level to inform CIA of the analytical needs of the president and to advise the agency of perceived shortcomings in collection and analysis.

In 1978 Brzezinski sent a memorandum to then DCI Stansfield Turner that made the following points:

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o Greater attention needs to be paid to clandestine collection targeted on the thinking and planning of key leaders or groups in important advanced and secondary countries, how they make policy decisions and how they will react to US decisions and those of other powers.

o Political analyses should be focused more on problems of particular concern to the US government. Too many papers are on subjects peripheral to US interests or offer broad overviews not directly linked to particular problems, events or developments of concern to the US government.

o There needs to be greater attention to the future. More papers are needed that briefly set forth facts and evidence and

then conclude with a well-informed speculative essay on the implications for the future: "We expect and hope for thought-provoking, reasonable views of the future based on what you know about the past and present....Analysts should not be timorous or bound by convention."

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After the Iranian Revolution, the Carter White House took other steps to ensure better communication of intelligence needs. The Political Intelligence Working Group (the deputy national security adviser, the under secretary of state for political affairs, the deputy director of central intelligence, and later the under secretary of defense for policy) was established at the White House to organize remedial action in response to the president's November 1978 note (criticizing political intelligence). The group interpreted its charter broadly and worked to improve and better focus field reporting by DoS, CIA, and attaches; to resolve bureaucratic impediments to good reporting; and to tackle other problems in order to improve collection and analysis and make intelligence more responsive. As part of the work of this informal group, senior staff representatives of Brzezinski meet weekly with representatives of the secretary of state and the DCI to review foreign developments or issues of current concern to the president and to provide feedback on intelligence coverage. These efforts had a salutary effect in improving communication between the intelligence community and the White House and improved intelligence support to the president.

A major innovation of the Reagan administration in this

regard was the president's decision in 1981 that his President's Daily Brief should be provided each day also to the vice president, the secretaries of state and defense, the national security adviser, and later the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff. They all were to have the same information as the president. Most significantly, primarily for security reasons, the PDB was to be delivered to these principals in person by a senior analytical officer of the CIA, who would sit with the principal, then carry the document back to the CIA. These arrangements provided an opportunity unique in U.S. intelligence history for intelligence professionals to have immediate, informed feedback from principals--their follow-up questions, tasking for further collection and analysis, and a sense of the priorities and concerns of the top officials in the government. Intelligence support was thereby improved as was the understanding of intelligence officers of policy dynamics and reality of the decision-making arena which they were supporting.

The day-to-day dialogue between intelligence officers and policymakers at all levels has increased significantly in recent years. Intelligence officers have been more aggressive in this regard and policymakers more receptive. Routine weekly meetings between the DCI and, separately, the secretaries of state and defense and the national security adviser have contributed to improved relevance and timeliness of intelligence support. The NSC staff and several Reagan national security advisers worked with intelligence managers to improve responsiveness to presidential intelligence needs and to remedy shortcomings in

intelligence support. With Reagan's encouragement, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board studied substantive and bureaucratic problems in the intelligence community and offered recommendations for improvement.

In sum, the dialogue essential to better intelligence support has improved, but such progress is highly perishable with frequent turnover in senior policy officials. Moreover, this improved dialogue until recently focused primarily on current intelligence or crisis-related subjects. Much remains to be done in institutionalizing improved White House intelligence guidance policy, attention to requirements, investment, and dialogue on strategy and longer-range issues.

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Overcoming White House Suspicion and CIA Isolation

Presidents expect their intelligence service to provide timely, accurate, and farseeing information and analysis. Thus, [~~nearly all~~ a high proportion of] presidential comments on the quality of intelligence are critical--prompted by the [~~CIA's~~ failure (of intelligence agencies) to meet expectations. Indeed, all but one quote at the outset of this article was in response to a specific situation where intelligence was perceived to have failed to measure up. In short, presidents often consider intelligence as much another problem bureaucracy as a source of helpful information, insight, and support.

This point is perhaps most graphically illustrated by a story involving president Johnson. Former DCI Richard Helms [~~recounted~~ recalls] a private dinner in the White House family quarters

during which president Johnson engaged John J. McCloy in a discussion about intelligence. He told McCloy things were going well in intelligence, but then continued:

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"Let me tell you about these intelligence guys. When I was growing up in Texas, we had a cow named Bessie. I'd go out early and milk her. I'd get her in the stanchion, seat myself and squeeze out a pail of fresh milk. One day I'd worked hard and gotten a full pail of milk, but I wasn't paying attention, and old Bessie swung around swept her shit-smeared tail through that bucket of milk. Now, you know, that's what these intelligence guys do. You work hard and get a good program or policy going, and they swing sweep a shit-smeared tail through it."

The dynamics of the relationship between the White House and the CIA and the lack of understanding of each other's perspective and motives are usually difficult for the players themselves to discern. They are even less clear to outside observers. Although most journalists and academicians focus on alleged distortions of intelligence to support policy, the players know that the relationship actually is often characterized by disagreement on substance and suspicion of motives. To the extent intelligence professionals are isolated (or isolate themselves) from White House and NSC officials and are unresponsive to their ~~White House~~ information requirements or suggestions on strategy, this adversarial nature of the relationship will be emphasized.

Although the routine order of business and internal organization may vary from administration to administration, there are ways to improve this relationship and intelligence support to the President. None is new. Efforts have been made to carry out most of the suggestions but they have been haphazard, transitory, or obstructed by bureaucratic, cultural, or attitudinal problems. This must change.

The DCI with his senior managers and the president with his staff must both promote and maintain close personal ties at all levels. Both must aggressively seek new ways to ~~include~~ inform intelligence officers ~~in~~ about policy initiatives under consideration or underway (in order) to determine how intelligence can make a contribution and how best to put intelligence information and assessments before the president. There should be closer contact on questions of long-term intelligence strategy, investment, and performance.

The role of the DCI is central to understanding the president's needs and conveying analysis to him. DCI aggressiveness in putting substantive matters before the president (and DCI access to the president) has varied greatly, though. The DCI should work closely with the national security adviser--perhaps the best source of information on issues of topical interest to the president and the foreign affairs and defense agendas. Finally, the importance of feedback from the president and his national security team is critical. Contrary to the views of some, the CIA cannot properly do its work in splendid isolation--and should not. Timeliness, relevance, and

objectivity are not incompatible.

The responsibility for making intelligence more relevant, timely, and helpful is not that of the DCI and senior officials of the intelligence community alone. The president and his senior national security team must take seriously their responsibility for the quality of intelligence support they get. They must be willing to make time for regular dialogue as to their intelligence requirements and for understanding intelligence capabilities, the impact of competing priorities for collection and analysis, and major investment decisions. They must be willing to play an active role in guiding intelligence strategy and determining priorities.

The above suggestions apply to improving the quality and usefulness of intelligence to the president. They will not [~~resolve~~ remove] the several causes of presidential displeasure--intelligence support to Congress, revised assessments that have policy implications, surprises, and politically disagreeable assessments. Even here mitigating steps can and have been taken. More can be done.

Intelligence professionals should take the initiative to let the national security adviser, the NSC staff, or a cabinet officer know when an estimate or other form of analysis will revise earlier assessments and have a significant impact on the president's policies. This would include, in particular, advance warning of new and important conclusions in military estimates. There is, of course, a risk that [~~someone~~ a policy official] will try to change or stop publication of an unwelcome or embarrassing estimate. Here

the DCI must and, this author is confident, will stand his ground to protect the integrity of the assessment and the process.

Intelligence needs to develop a mechanism for better informing the White House about support provided to the Congress. The intelligence agencies are part of the executive branch; the DCI is appointed by and reports to the president. It is not improper or inappropriate for the intelligence community to keep the president's foreign affairs and congressional affairs staff better and regularly advised of papers provided to the Congress, as well as possibly controversial testimony or briefings. Keeping the executive informed about CIA dealings with Congress is an important aspect of building presidential confidence that the CIA is not trying to undercut him or his policies when responding to legitimate congressional requests.

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Note

This article addresses the CIA - White House relationship in terms of intelligence assessments and substantive support to the policy process. Although the CIA's involvement in operational activities abroad, especially covert action, plainly affects the relationship with the White House and the president, this article does not address that aspect. Although a complex and controversial subject warranting separate treatment, the operational-covert action element of the relationship significantly does not affect the analysis or conclusions of this article.

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Robert M. Gates is deputy director of central intelligence.

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Between

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Adm. Bobby R. Inman, USN (Ret.)
3509 Needles Drive
Austin, Texas 78746

Dear Bob,

It was good to talk to you after too long a time since our last conversation. I am glad you and Nancy were able to get away on the cruise despite the incredible undertaking in the business world in which you were engaged.

Enclosed is the article that I agreed to do for The Washington Quarterly. It will be published at the end of November.

Hope to see you soon.

Regards,

STAT

Robert M. Gates

Enclosure
As Stated

P-310-1

An Opportunity Unfulfilled
The Use and Perceptions of Intelligence at the White House

Robert M. Gates

"Collection, processing and analysis all are directed at one goal -- producing accurate reliable intelligence.... Who are the customers who get this finished product? At the very top, of the list is the President. He is, of course, the Central Intelligence Agency's most important customer."

(CIA Information Pamphlet)

What have our most important customers had to say about how well we achieve that goal?

"I am not satisfied with the quality of our political intelligence."

Jimmy Carter, 1978

"What the hell do those clowns do out there in Langley?"

Richard Nixon, 1970

"CIA Director McCone...made recommendations for checking and improving the quality of intelligence reporting. I promptly accepted the suggestions...."

Lyndon Johnson, Memoirs

"During the rush of...events in the final days of 1958, the Central Intelligence Agency suggested for the first time that a Castro victory might not be in the interests of the United States."

Dwight Eisenhower, Memoirs

A search of Presidential memoirs and those of principal assistants over the past 30 years or so turns up remarkably little discussion or perspective on the role played by Directors of Central Intelligence (DCI) or intelligence information in Presidential decisionmaking on foreign affairs. What little commentary there has been, as suggested by the introductory quotes, is nearly uniformly critical. Similarly, in intelligence memoir literature, while one can read a great deal about covert operations and technical achievements, there is little on the role of intelligence in Presidential decisionmaking. Thus, on both sides of the relationship there is a curious, discreet silence.

Why this dearth of first-hand reflection and evaluation in a major area of foreign affairs and national security history? Partly, perhaps, it is because even still there is a reluctance to discuss what both parties perceive as sensitive information. Partly, it may be because senior officials find it difficult to distinguish what they learn or see in intelligence reports from other sources of information, ambiguities in the role of intelligence in policymaking, confusion over what is intelligence, the inclination of senior officials to believe they already knew what they just read in an intelligence report, and the common predilection of senior officials to rely on and recall personal contacts as opposed to the written word or anonymous experts.

I believe, however, that this void in the study of Presidents, intelligence and decisionmaking -- apart from covert action -- is also explained by factors that continue to dominate the relationship between Presidents and the CIA and Intelligence Community: intelligence collection and assessment are black arts for most Presidents and their key advisers, neither adequately understood nor adequately exploited. For intelligence officers, Presidential and senior level views of the intelligence they receive and how they use it (or not) are just as unfamiliar, giving rise among intelligence officers to wishful thinking and even conceit. In short, over the years, both the White House and the CIA have

failed to take maximum advantage of the opportunity for better intelligence support for the President and decisionmaking.* This situation is not peculiar to any single Administration or particular view of the CIA, but rather is a problem of personal relationships, bureaucratic cultures, and the policy process itself.

* This article addresses the CIA-White House relationship in terms of intelligence assessments and substantive support to the policy process. While CIA's involvement in operational activities abroad, especially covert action, plainly affects the relationship with the White House and the President, I do not address that aspect in this article. A complex and controversial subject warranting separate treatment, I do not believe the operational/covert action element of the relationship significantly affects the analysis or conclusions of this article.

SETTING THE SCENE

To understand how intelligence is used and regarded at the White House first requires an understanding of the context in which it is received. The sheer volume of information flowing to the President is staggering. More than 200 agencies seek to draw his attention to programs, proposals or vital pieces of information. An astonishing amount of their work finds its way to the White House.

Policy agencies such as State, Defense, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and others prepare and send great quantities of paperwork to the President. Most Presidents also get considerable information and analysis on foreign affairs from the media. These sources of information join a river of correspondence to the President from countless consultants, academics, think tanks, political contacts, family and friends, political supporters, journalists, authors, foreign leaders, and concerned citizens. (Lest you think such correspondence can easily be disregarded, it is my experience that most Presidents often attach as much -- if not more -- credibility to the views of family, friends and private contacts as they do to those of executive agencies.) In sum, despite the mystique of intelligence for the public, for most Presidents it is just one of a number of sources of information. Intelligence

reporting must compete for the President's time and attention, and that competition is intense.

It is the responsibility of the White House Staff, including the National Security Council (NSC) Staff, to impose order on this avalanche of paper and to reduce it to manageable proportions. The NSC alone processes some 10,000 "action" papers a year -- not including intelligence analyses or other purely "informational" papers. Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's National Security Adviser, once asked me to calculate how many pages of reading he sent to President Carter weekly; the total averaged many hundreds of pages -- and among White House offices the NSC was among the most disciplined with respect to the length and number of items going to the President. These, then, are the first hurdles that intelligence faces: a President with a heavy schedule, inundated by paper and demands for decisions, surrounded by senior assistants who have as a main role trying to keep that President from being overwhelmed by paper; and a President with vast and varied non-intelligence sources upon which he also relies and in which he often has considerable confidence.

WHAT INTELLIGENCE DOES THE PRESIDENT GET

The President routinely receives only one intelligence document that is not summarized or commented upon by someone

outside the Intelligence Community: The President's Daily Brief -- CIA's principal vehicle for reporting and analyzing current developments for the President. He receives this, usually via his National Security Adviser every morning, along with a package that has varied little from President to President: a few (3-6) State and CIA cables of special significance; occasionally a sensitive intelligence report from the CIA; the Defense Intelligence Agency, or the National Security Agency; selected wire service items; State or CIA situation reports (rarely both) if there is a crisis abroad; and often NSC and State morning cable summaries. Contrary to what is commonly believed, this is the only regularly scheduled package of current intelligence the President receives during the day.

Through the course of the day, however, the National Security Adviser keeps the President apprised of significant developments overseas and may handcarry especially important cables directly to the President. In a crisis, the flow of information increases. More analysis and reports will be given the President. He will receive current intelligence orally in meetings with his senior White House, State, Defense and Intelligence advisers, as well as from the media -- often the first source of information. Nevertheless, on a day-to-day basis, apart from the PDB, successive Presidents generally have seen only that current intelligence selected by the National

Security Adviser, who works to make that morning package as succinct and small as he responsibly can.

It was not always this way, even in modern times. Before the Kennedy Administration, the President, his National Security Adviser and the NSC Staff relied on the CIA and State to provide incoming cables and information as soon as they were processed. It was an approach that led to considerable competition, redundancy and placed a President at the mercy of the bureaucracies for information.

This system was revolutionized, however, when President Kennedy created the White House Situation Room to which State, the National Security Agency, the Defense Department, and the CIA began to provide unevaluated or "raw" intelligence information electronically -- an approach with its own readily apparent shortcomings. (Many a time, an overeager White House aide has run to a President with a dramatic but unevaluated intelligence report, and later sheepishly had to return to acknowledge the source was poor or there had been a mistake.) Thus, the NSC and President began receiving intelligence and diplomatic cables on developments abroad often as soon as, and often before, State desk officers and intelligence analysts.

One result of the establishment of the Situation Room was a significant diminution in the value to the White House of CIA's

and other agencies' current intelligence reporting that to this day has not been fully grasped by the Intelligence Community. Only analysis by experienced intelligence specialists lends value to current intelligence reporting provided the White House. Even so, because of the Situation Room, intelligence information from abroad is sometimes in the President's hands before reaching the DCI, other senior intelligence officials, senior policy officials -- and the experts.

Naturally, the President receives information through channels other than the early morning folder and the occasional cable during the day. For example, most Presidents routinely have received current intelligence reports in meetings and the key judgments of important National Intelligence Estimates (and other intelligence as well) either directly from the DCI or through the National Security Adviser. All DCIs also have briefed the President and his senior advisers both individually and in formal meetings of the National Security Council. Moreover, discussion at such meetings serves to convey information to the President from diverse sources. The President also receives abbreviated versions of intelligence assessments in many policy papers.

Nevertheless, each of the four Presidents I have observed has received a infinitesimal part of published intelligence and only a fraction even of analysis specifically prepared for

senior policymakers. This has placed a premium on the President's Daily Brief, on the willingness and ability of the DCI to give important assessments (published or oral) directly to the President, and on the willingness of the National Security Adviser to forward key intelligence reports to the President. Disinterest or reluctance on the part of a DCI (or National Security Adviser) to take an activist, even aggressive role in this respect is a severe -- even irreparable -- handicap to ensuring that intelligence information and assessments reach the President.

WHAT PRESIDENTS THINK OF WHAT THEY GET

Perhaps in recognition of how busy Presidents are, for years there has been an adage at the White House that the absence of criticism should be regarded as praise. Along these lines, Presidential comments on intelligence assessments are so rare that we are understandably tempted to assume satisfaction with what is being received. Regrettably, however, this is doubtful. Many of the infrequent comments are critical, as illustrated at the outset of this article.

I believe the negative perceptions of Intelligence of most Presidents and their senior advisers while in office or afterward are due to several factors:

-- The first and most significant is failure. Whether Nixon's unhappiness over misestimates of planned Soviet ICBM deployments or Carter's over failure to forecast the Iranian revolution or untimely upward revisions of North Korean troop strength, these Presidents and their advisers -- with justification -- believed CIA assessments either contributed importantly to policy disasters or made them vulnerable to later criticism. Moreover, Presidents expect that for what they spend on intelligence, the end-product should be able to predict coups, upheavals, riots, intentions, military moves and the like with accuracy. And, in the early morning hours when the National Security Adviser must repair to the President's study with the (usually) bad news about such events, the Chief Executive will not unnaturally wonder why his billions for intelligence do not spare him unpleasant surprises.

-- Second, Presidents do not like controversy within the Executive Branch, and they like it even less when it becomes public. Nor do Presidents welcome debate over basic facts once they have made a decision. Whether the issue is troublesome assessments on Vietnam (Johnson), the public dispute between the CIA and Defense on whether the SS-9 was a MRV or MIRV (Nixon),

North Korean force levels (Carter), or the Soviet gas pipeline (Reagan), these and other intelligence debates over technology transfer, verification of arms control, Soviet defense spending, Soviet weapons programs and many more have caused controversy and weakened support for policy. To the extent intelligence information results (in the eyes of White House officials) in internal government controversy, problems with the Congress, or embarrassing publicity, it will draw Presidential ire or at a minimum leave the President with unflattering views of his intelligence services.

-- Third, Presidents do not welcome new intelligence assessments undercutting policies based on earlier assessments. As professionals, we are constantly revisiting important subjects as better and later information or improved analytical tools become available. When this results in changing the statistical basis for the US position in MBFR, substantially elevating estimates of North Korean forces at a time when the President is pressing to reduce US forces in South Korea, or "discovering" a Soviet brigade in Cuba, it is no revelation to observe that Presidents regard us less than fondly.

-- Fourth, successive Administrations have generally regarded with skepticism the growing direct relationship between Congress and US intelligence agencies. In recent years, the provision of great quantities of highly sensitive information and analysis to Members of Congress and their staffs has largely eliminated the Executive's longstanding advantage of a near monopoly of information on foreign affairs and defense. The flow of information to the Hill has given the Congress a powerful tool in its search for a greater voice in the making of foreign and defense policy vis-a-vis the Executive -- and Presidents cannot be indifferent to the fact that intelligence has provided Congress with that tool and that the White House is nearly helpless to blunt it except in very rare cases.

-- Fifth, I believe Presidents and their national security teams usually are ill-informed about intelligence capabilities and therefore often have unrealistic expectations of what intelligence can do for them, especially when they hear about the genuinely extraordinary capabilities of US intelligence for collecting and processing information. When they too soon learn of our limitations, they are inevitably

disappointed. Policymakers usually learn the hard way that while intelligence can tell them a great deal, it only rarely -- and usually in crises involving military forces -- provides the kind of unambiguous and timely information that can make day-to-day decisionmaking simpler and less risky. Intelligence officers occasionally encourage such exaggerated expectations by pretending a confidence in their judgments they cannot reasonably justify and by failing to be candid about the quality and reliability of their information and the possibility of other outcomes. Once bitten by an erroneous or misleading intelligence assessment, most White House officials -- including Presidents -- will be twice-shy about relying on or accepting unquestioningly a second.

-- Finally, beyond these broad factors affecting the White House-Intelligence relationship are narrower, more parochial bureaucratic stresses. Often, staff at the White House do not know how to use effectively the vast system they direct -- and, too often, an intelligence bureaucracy that does not want "outside" direction offers little help. There is a longstanding perception at the White House that changing the way the intelligence bureaucracies do business -- for example, even the presentation of intelligence information to

the President -- is just too hard, takes too much time and energy, and ultimately yields little.

A useful case study illustrating the simultaneous contribution of intelligence to Presidential policymaking and the problems it can bring, is the ratification proceedings of the Treaty on Intermediate Nuclear Forces. The capabilities of US intelligence to monitor deployed Soviet INF weapons and associated treaty provisions, made the treaty possible in the first place. However, our uncertainties in some areas relating to the Treaty, disagreements within the intelligence community on the number of non-deployed INF missiles, public disclosure of these disagreements and exploitation of them in the Senate's ratification proceedings, all presented problems to Executive policymakers. For the White House, on this issue -- as so many others -- intelligence was a bittersweet player.

Presidents and other principals over the years have faulted the CIA for lack of imagination in anticipating the needs of the President and for insufficient aggressiveness in keeping itself informed on policy issues under consideration. Neither Presidents nor their Assistants for National Security Affairs have felt it their responsibility regularly to keep senior Agency officials well informed in this regard, to provide day-to-day detailed tasking or to provide helpful feedback. For guidance, the CIA thus often has had to rely on what the

DCI can pick up in high-level meetings and contacts -- and the skill and interest of different DCIs in this has varied greatly. Indeed, some DCIs have neither sought nor wanted guidance or feedback from the White House, or have sought it on some issues and resisted it on others.

Irregular feedback and intelligence policy guidance -- or the lack of any at all -- in the four Administrations that I have observed first hand has been an obstacle to improved and more responsive intelligence performance. The lack of receptivity on the part of senior intelligence officials on those infrequent occasions when guidance or advice has been offered is equally to blame. Even so, if Executive Branch and especially White House officials view Congressional influence on intelligence strategy, priorities and investment as excessive, it is in part because senior policymakers in successive administrations have neglected their own responsibilities in these areas.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

A President and his national security team (the Vice President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, and National Security Adviser) should view intelligence as an important asset in foreign policymaking and should be prepared to devote the time and energy to working with the DCI to provide useful

guidance and direction to the collection and analysis efforts of CIA and the rest of US intelligence. Contrary to the view of those who are apprehensive over a close relationship between policymakers and intelligence, I believe it is not close enough -- that more interaction, feedback and direction as to strategy, priorities and requirements is critical to better performance, and that this can be accomplished without jeopardizing the independence and integrity of intelligence assessments and judgments.

There has been progress in the last ten years, though much more can be done. The Carter and Reagan administrations have worked constructively at a high level to inform CIA of the analytical needs of the President and to advise the Agency of perceived shortcomings in collection and analysis.

In 1978, Dr. Brzezinski sent a memorandum to then DCI Turner that made the following points:

-- Greater attention needs to be paid to clandestine collection targeted on the thinking and planning of key leaders or groups in important advanced and secondary countries, how they make policy decisions and how they will react to US decisions and those of other powers.

-- Political analyses should be focused more on problems of particular concern to the US government. Too many papers are on subjects peripheral to US interests or offer broad overviews not directly linked to particular problems, events or developments of concern to the US government.

-- There needs to be greater attention to the future. More papers are needed that briefly set forth facts and evidence and then conclude with a well-informed speculative essay on the implications for the future: "We expect and hope for thought-provoking, reasonable views of the future based on what you know about the past and present.... Analysts should not be timorous or bound by convention."

After the Iranian Revolution, the Carter White House took other steps to ensure better communication of intelligence needs. A Political Intelligence Working Group (the Deputy National Security Adviser, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, and later the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy), was established at the White House to organize remedial action in response to the President's November 1978 note. The group interpreted its charter broadly and worked to improve and

better focus field reporting by State, CIA and Attaches; to resolve bureaucratic impediments to good reporting; and to tackle other problems in order to improve collection and analysis and make intelligence more responsive. As part of the work of this informal group, senior staff representatives of Dr. Brzezinski met weekly with representatives of the Secretary of State and the DCI to review foreign developments or issues of current concern to the President and to provide feedback on intelligence coverage. These efforts had a salutary effect in improving communication between the Intelligence Community and the White House and improved intelligence support to the President.

A major innovation of the Reagan Administration in this regard was the President's decision in 1981 that his President's Daily Brief should be provided each day also to the Vice President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, the National Security Adviser and later the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They all were to have the same information as the President. Most significantly, primarily for security reasons, the PDB was to be delivered to these principals in person by a senior analytical officer of the CIA who would sit with the principal and then carry the document back to the CIA. These arrangements provided an opportunity unique in US intelligence history for intelligence professionals to get immediate, informed feedback from principals -- their follow-up

questions, tasking for further collection and analysis, and a sense of the priorities and concerns of the top officials in the government. Intelligence support was thereby improved as was the understanding of intelligence officers of policy dynamics and reality of the decisionmaking arena which they were supporting.

The day to day dialogue between intelligence officers and policymakers at all levels has increased significantly in recent years. Intelligence officers have been more aggressive in this regard and policymakers more receptive. Routine weekly meetings between the DCI and, separately, the Secretaries of State and Defense and the National Security Adviser have contributed to improved relevance and timeliness of intelligence support. The NSC Staff and several Reagan NSC advisers worked with intelligence managers to improve responsiveness to Presidential intelligence needs and to remedy shortcomings in intelligence support. With the encouragement of the President, his Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board studied substantive and bureaucratic problems in the Intelligence Community and offered recommendations for improvement.

In sum, the dialogue essential to better intelligence support has improved, but such progress is highly perishable with frequent turnover in senior policy officials. Moreover,

this improved dialogue until recently focused primarily on current intelligence or crisis-related subjects. Much remains to be done in institutionalizing improved White House intelligence guidance policy, attention to requirements, investment, and dialogue on strategy and longer-range issues.

OVERCOMING WHITE HOUSE SUSPICION AND CIA ISOLATION

Presidents expect their intelligence service to provide timely, accurate and farseeing information and analysis. Thus, nearly all Presidential comments on the quality of intelligence are critical -- prompted by our failure to meet expectations. Indeed, all but one quote at the outset of this article was in response to a specific situation where intelligence was perceived to have failed to measure up. In short, Presidents often consider intelligence as much another problem bureaucracy as a source of helpful information, insight and support.

This point is perhaps most graphically illustrated by a story involving President Johnson. Former DCI Richard Helms recounts a private dinner in the White House family quarters during which President Johnson engaged John J. McCloy in a discussion about intelligence. He told McCloy things were going well in intelligence, but then continued: "Let me tell you about these intelligence guys. When I was growing up in

Texas, we had a cow named Bessie. I'd go out early and milk her. I'd get her in the stanchion, seat myself and squeeze out a pail of fresh milk. One day I'd worked hard and gotten a full pail of milk, but I wasn't paying attention, and old Bessie swept her shit-smeared tail through that bucket of milk. Now, you know, that's what these intelligence guys do. You work hard and get a good program or policy going, and they sweep a shit-smeared tail through it."

The dynamics of the relationship between the White House and CIA and the lack of understanding of each other's perspective and motives are usually difficult for the players themselves to discern. They are even less clear to outside observers. While most journalists and academicians focus on alleged distortions of intelligence to support policy, the players know that the relationship actually is often characterized by disagreement on substance and suspicion of motives. To the extent intelligence professionals are isolated (or isolate themselves) from White House/NSC officials and are unresponsive to White House informational requirements or suggestions on strategy, this adversarial nature of the relationship will be emphasized.

Although the routine order of business and internal organization may vary from Administration to Administration, there are ways to improve this relationship and intelligence

support to the President. None is new. Efforts have been made to carry out most of the suggestions but they have been haphazard, transitory or obstructed by bureaucratic, cultural or attitudinal problems. This must change.

-- The DCI and his senior managers and the President and his staff must both promote and maintain close personal ties at all levels. Both must aggressively seek new ways to let intelligence officers in on policy initiatives under consideration or underway to figure out how intelligence can make a contribution, and how best to get intelligence information and assessments before the President. There should be closer contact on questions of long term intelligence strategy, investment and performance.

-- The role of the DCI is central to understanding the President's needs and conveying analysis to him. DCI aggressiveness in getting substantive matters before the President (and DCI access to the President) has varied greatly, though. The DCI should work closely with the National Security Adviser -- perhaps the best source of information on issues of topical interest to the President and the foreign affairs and defense agenda. Finally, the importance of feedback from the President and his national security team is critical.

Contrary to the views of some, we cannot properly do our work in splendid isolation -- and should not. Timeliness, relevance and objectivity are not incompatible.

-- The responsibility for making intelligence more relevant, timely and helpful is not that of the DCI and senior officials of the Intelligence Community alone. The President and his senior national security team must take seriously their responsibility for the quality of intelligence support they get. They must be willing to make time for regular dialogue as to their intelligence requirements; for understanding intelligence capabilities, the impact of competing priorities for collection and analysis, and major investment decisions. They must be willing to play an active role in guiding intelligence strategy and determining priorities.

The above "suggestions" apply to improving the quality and usefulness of intelligence to the President. They will not resolve the several causes of Presidential displeasure -- intelligence support to Congress, revised assessments that have policy implications, surprises, and politically disagreeable assessments. Even here mitigating steps can and have been taken. More can be done. For example:

-- Intelligence professionals should take the initiative to let the Security Adviser, the NSC Staff, or a Cabinet officer know when an estimate or other form of analysis will revise earlier assessments and have a significant impact on the President's policies. This would include, in particular, advance warning of new and important conclusions in military estimates. There is, of course, a risk that someone will try to change or stop publication of an unwelcome or embarrassing estimate. Here the DCI must and, I am confident, will, stand his ground to protect the integrity of the assessment and the process.

-- Intelligence needs to develop a mechanism for better informing the White House about support provided to the Congress. The intelligence agencies are part of the Executive Branch; the DCI is appointed by and reports to the President. It is not improper or inappropriate for the Intelligence Community to keep the President's foreign affairs and Congressional affairs staff more completely and regularly advised of papers provided to the Congress, as well as possibly controversial testimony or briefings. Keeping the Executive informed about CIA dealings with Congress is an important aspect of building Presidential confidence that we are not

trying to undercut him or his policies when responding to legitimate Congressional requests.

-- Finally, ground rules should be developed for the disclosure of declassified intelligence. The current lack of a systematic approach contributes to leaks; to White House suspicion of obstructionism, bureaucratic games or pursuit of a contrary policy agenda by intelligence professionals; and concern on the part of intelligence officers over the appearance (and sometimes the reality) of politicization of intelligence by White House or other policymaker-directed declassification of information. This is not a new problem, but it has worsened over the years. Many in the Executive Branch and Congress agree that intelligence information undergirding major policy decisions must often be made available for public education or to gain support for national security decisions. There is widespread demand for unclassified publication of intelligence assessments or research on issues of moment to the country. But who should make these decisions? This is not the place to propose solutions, but the problem exists and it seriously affects the relationship between the President and the intelligence agencies on the one hand and the Executive and Legislative Branches on the other.

The usefulness of the CIA to Presidents in that area for which the CIA was primarily established -- collection, reporting, analysis and production of information -- at times has suffered because of self-imposed isolation by CIA and the lack of sustained interest, understanding and involvement by a President and his national security team. Lack of White House involvement at times has left intelligence professionals adrift amid conflicting priorities and requirements, with the inevitable price in relevance and timeliness.

CIA and the other US intelligence agencies represent an extraordinary national asset. The rebuilding of the Intelligence Community over the past decade has vastly augmented our collection and analysis capabilities and sharpened our skills. Congress has greatly enhanced its understanding of intelligence and shown a willingness -- even determination -- to provide guidance and direction, as well as funding. I believe the White House should assert more aggressively its proper intelligence policy direction and guidance role, and that CIA should welcome this role. Only thus can we seize the opportunity further to improve intelligence support to the President and, concomitantly, better serve the policymaking process.

The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

19 August 1988

TO: Roy Godson
National Strategy Information Center

Roy -

Attached is the draft article I called about and Diane described. I was asked to write it for the Washington Quarterly, as a companion piece to those you and Anne Armstrong are doing.

There are some places where I need to do more work. Nonetheless, I would appreciate any suggestions or comments you might have. Please let me hear by Wednesday.

Regards.

STAT

Robert M. Gates

(P.S. Please keep to yourself and destroy after we talk. As you will see, it's pretty candid.)

P-310, R

Opportunity Unfulfilled
The Use and Perceptions of Intelligence at the White House

Robert M. Gates

"Collection, processing and analysis all are directed at one goal -- producing accurate reliable intelligence.... Who are the customers who get this finished product? At the very top, of the list is the President. He is, of course, the Central Intelligence Agency's most important customer."

Intelligence: The Acme of Skill
(CIA Information Pamphlet)

And what have our most important customers had to say about how well we achieve that goal?

"I am not satisfied with the quality of our political intelligence."

Jimmy Carter, 1978

"What the hell do those clowns do out there in Langley?"

Richard Nixon, 1970

ICS 7161-88
19 August 1988

NOTE FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

STAT FROM: [redacted]
Deputy Director for Requirements and Evaluation, ICS

SUBJECT: Review of Draft Article

STAT REFERENCE: Note for [redacted] et al, from DDCI, dtd 15 Aug 88

1. This note responds to your request.

2. I think the draft article is outstanding and, in overview, delivers in a public text a long overdue and extremely important message. Most of these ideas apply to the origins of this "opportunity unfulfilled" and to the improvements.

3. Even so, I suggest a few ideas for you to consider for the purpose of improving the article:

- o There should be up front a one sentence summary which picks up both the title and the last paragraph's punch line. Such a sentence might be:

  > While there are some obvious and important reasons why the President and his intelligence components have some difficulty, the President and this nation deserve a better performance from US intelligence and can achieve it, but only when White House officers and intelligence professionals can work together.

- o With respect to origins (your pages 10-15), I would add one "new" idea and expand one of yours.

  The new idea is that Presidents have very wide-ranging agendas and find intelligence not nearly so useful or relevant to their day-to-day, or longer term interests and problems, as less classified and more readily available materials. The key US and foreign newspapers and magazines do a better job on many subjects than does US intelligence. There are many examples of this and reasons for it. The idea is touched upon at the bottom of page 11, last sentence.

P-310-1R

SUBJECT: Review of Draft Article

The expansion is on page 14, central tic: I would expand the first sentence so that it reads (as marked) "...have great ignorance about the intelligence profession and US capabilities and therefore have unrealistic...."

- o With respect to improvements, I would add an idea, or highlight it. This thought is that US intelligence has to do a lot better at producing and delivering relevant products to senior officers. My view is that when a policy issue is coming to a head, US intelligence has to be involved and our products have to be injected into the process so they can be useful and used. The element of timing is vital. But US intelligence has to focus its resources so that when the President is ready for our help, we are there--not on call, if someone remembers to think of us.

- o And I would add an idea, conceivably a stand-alone, separate paragraph on page 25, at the bottom. The central thought is that US intelligence can itself be better organized, and at its highest levels and on a Community-wide basis, to both help policy officials and aid the Intelligence Community in understanding what policy officials need. In fact, US intelligence is working to create exactly such a capability. This improvement will be valuable in its own right and will have particular benefit if the dialogue improves between senior policy officials and intelligence professionals.

4. And I have attached a copy of a couple of pages with several minor word fixes which you may find of use.

5. I hope this helps. If you need more, call.

STAT

Attachment:
As Stated

SUBJECT: Review of Draft Article

DISTRIBUTION: (ICS 7161-88 w/att.)
Original - DDCI
1 - ER (for file)
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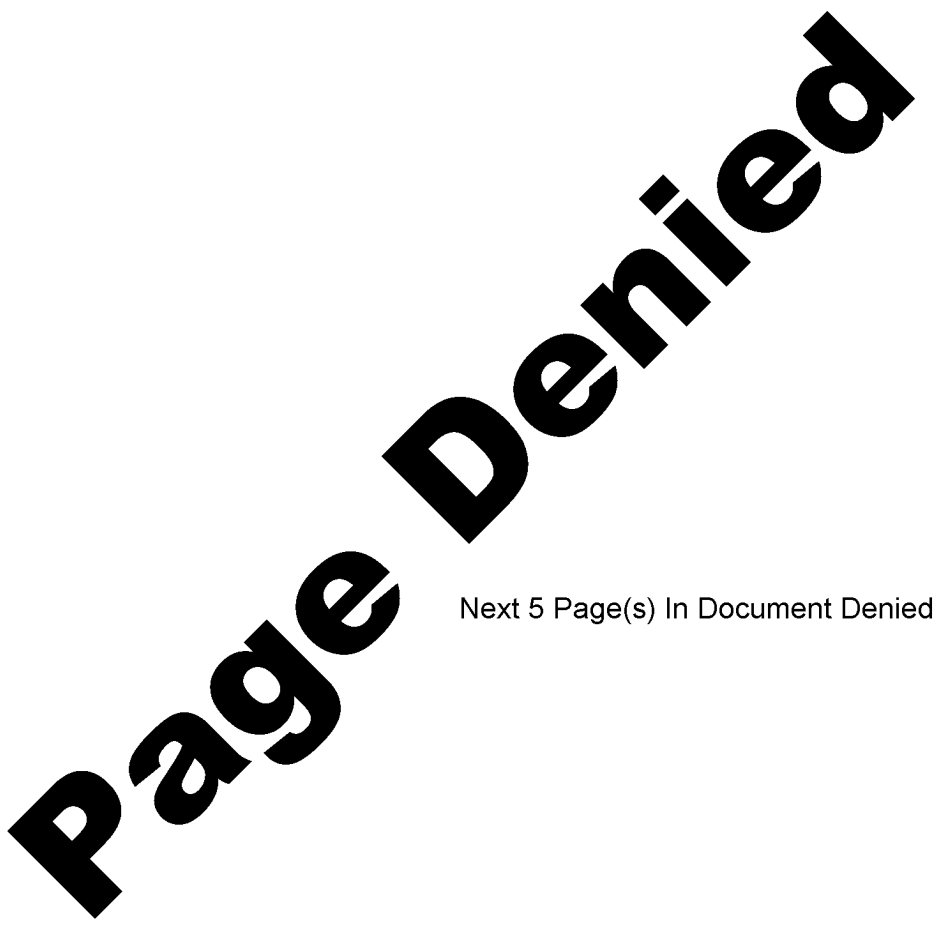
STAT DCI/ICS/DDR&E: [redacted] (19Aug88)



Next 5 Page(s) In Document Denied

The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

17 August 1988

STAT TO:

STAT

Attached is the draft article I discussed with you. It still needs some more work; some useful innovations under the Reagan Administration need to be mentioned following on page 19. There are some other places where I need to do a little more work as well. Nonetheless, I think this is sufficient for you to review and comment upon.

I will be in the office until early evening Friday and Saturday morning. You can, of course, call me
STAT at home

I am envious of your gastronomical if not your political experiences this week.

STAT

Robert M. Gates

Attachment:
As Stated

Richard Nixon, 1970

DCI
EXEC
REG

P-310-1R

Opportunity Unfulfilled
The Use and Perceptions of Intelligence at the White House

Robert M. Gates

"Collection, processing and analysis all are directed at one goal -- producing accurate reliable intelligence.... Who are the customers who get this finished product? At the very top, of the list is the President. He is, of course, the Central Intelligence Agency's most important customer."

Intelligence: The Acme of Skill

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Jimmy Carter, 1978

"What the hell do those clowns do out there in Langley?"

Richard Nixon, 1970

The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

ER 3282 88

17 August 1988

TO: Barry Kelly
National Security Council

Barry -

Attached is the draft article I mentioned on the telephone I was asked to write for the Washington Quarterly at Anne Armstrong's suggestion. It will appear in late November.

Let me know if you have any comments or suggestions. I think you will find the general approach congenial to your own views, based on our previous conversations. I will be providing the final version to the journal Friday afternoon. (We are long overdue for lunch; let's set something up.)

Regards,

STAT

Robert M. Gates

Attachment:
As Stated

(I want to strengthen p 19 on Reagan Administration - suggestions welcome.)

DCI EXEC REG

P-310-1R

Opportunity Unfulfilled
The Use and Perceptions of Intelligence at the White House

Robert M. Gates

"Collection, processing and analysis all are directed at one goal -- producing accurate reliable intelligence.... Who are the customers who get this finished product? At the very top, of the list is the President. He is, of course, the Central Intelligence Agency's most important customer."

Intelligence: The Acme of Skill
(CIA Information Pamphlet)

And what have our most important customers had to say about how well we achieve that goal?

"I am not satisfied with the quality of our political intelligence."

Jimmy Carter, 1978

"What the hell do those clowns do out there in Langley?"

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"CIA Director McCone...made recommendations for checking and improving the quality of intelligence reporting. I promptly accepted the suggestions...."

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"During the rush of...events in the final days of 1958, the Central Intelligence Agency suggested for the first time that a Castro victory might not be in the interests of the United States."

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A search of Presidential memoirs or those of principal assistants over the past 30 years or so turns up remarkably little discussion or perspective on the role played by Directors of Central Intelligence or intelligence information in Presidential decisionmaking on foreign affairs. What little commentary there has been, as suggested by the introductory quotes, is nearly uniformly critical. Similarly, in intelligence memoir literature, while one can read a great deal about covert operations and technical achievements, there is little on the role of intelligence in Presidential decisionmaking. Thus, on both sides of the relationship there is a curious, discreet silence. As research by numerous scholars has documented, intelligence information and assessments, however, have played a central role in many of the critical decisions of the last seven Presidents.

Why the dearth of first-hand reflection and evaluation in a major area of foreign affairs and national security history? Partly, perhaps it is because even still there is a reluctance to discuss what both parties perceive as sensitive information. I believe, however, that this void is more likely explained by factors that continue to dominate the relationship between Presidents and the CIA and Intelligence Community: intelligence collection and assessment are a black hole for most Presidents and their key advisers, neither understood nor adequately exploited; for intelligence officers, Presidential and senior level views of the intelligence they receive and how they use it (or not) are just as unfamiliar, giving rise to perceptions dominated by wishful thinking and peculiar conceit. In short, both historically and contemporaneously, year after year, because of ignorance, inattention, and passivity, both the White House and CIA fail to take maximum advantage of the opportunity for better intelligence support for the President and decisionmaking.

As a new administration prepares to take office it is perhaps timely to examine the relationship between Intelligence and a President so that new officials, intelligence officials, and others might better understand what happens at the White House to the product of intelligence collection and analysis, and so both the White House and CIA can work to improve intelligence support to the President.

SETTING THE SCENE

To understand how intelligence is used and regarded at the White House first requires an understanding of the context in which it is received. The sheer volume of paperwork addressed to the President is staggering. Federal employees in more than 200 agencies seek to draw his attention to this or that program, proposal or vital piece of information. An astonishing amount of their work survives departmental review and finds its way to the White House. There these papers join a river of correspondence to the President from countless consultants, academics, think tanks, political contacts, family and friends, political supporters, journalists, authors, foreign leaders, and concerned citizens. (Lest you think such correspondence can easily be disregarded, it is my experience that most Presidents often attach as much -- if not more -- credibility to the views of family, (old) friends and private contacts as they do to those of executive agencies. Vice President Rockefeller once asked my office at the NSC if Denmark really was planning to sell Greenland. Wondering all the while if he was in the market, we confirmed with CIA that this rumor from a private source was untrue. But Rockefeller had taken it seriously.) There are many other, less innocuous examples of Presidents and senior advisers being misinformed where intelligence knows the facts to be otherwise.

It is the responsibility of the Domestic Policy Staff or its equivalent, the NSC, other Executive offices, and the White House itself to impose order on this avalanche of pulp and to reduce it to manageable proportions. The NSC alone year in, year out processes 7,000-10,000 "action" papers a year -- not including intelligence analyses or other purely "informational" papers. Dr. Brzezinski once asked me to calculate how many pages of reading he sent to President Carter weekly; the total averaged many hundreds of pages -- and among White House offices the NSC was among the most stringent with respect to the length and number of items going to the President. These, then, are the first hurdles that intelligence faces: a president with a heavy schedule, inundated by paper and demands for decisions, surrounded by senior assistants who have as a main role trying to keep that President from being overwhelmed by paper; and a President with vast and varied non-intelligence sources upon which he also relies and in which he often has considerable confidence.

WHAT HE GETS

The President routinely receives only one intelligence product that is not summarized or commented upon by someone outside the Community: The President's Daily Brief. He

receives this, usually via his National Security Adviser every morning, along with a package that has varied little from President to President: a few (3-6) State and CIA cables of special significance; occasionally a sensitive intelligence report from CIA; selected wire service items; State or CIA situation reports (rarely both) if there is a crisis abroad; and often NSC and State morning cable summaries. Contrary to what is commonly believed, this is the only regularly scheduled package of current intelligence the President receives during the day. However, through the course of the day, the National Security Adviser keeps the President apprised of significant developments overseas and may handcarry especially important cables directly to the President. In a crisis, the flow of information increases. More analysis and reports will be given the President. He will receive current intelligence orally in meetings with his senior White House, State, Defense and Intelligence advisers, as well as from the media -- often the first source of information. Nevertheless, on a day-to-day basis apart from the PDB, successive Presidents generally have seen only that current intelligence selected by the National Security Adviser, who works to make that morning package as succinct and small as he responsibly can.

It was not always this way -- even in modern times. Before the Kennedy Administration, the President, his National Security Adviser and the NSC Staff relied almost entirely on

CIA and State to provide incoming current intelligence as soon as it was processed by their operations centers and circulated to substantive officials who could decide what to send to the White House. It was an approach that led to considerable competition, redundancy and placed a President at the mercy of the bureaucracies for confirmation.

This system was revolutionized, however, when President Kennedy created the White House Situation Room to which CIA, State, NSA and the Pentagon began to provide unprocessed intelligence information electronically -- an approach with its own readily apparent shortcomings. (Many a time, an over eager White House aide has run to a President with a dramatic but unevaluated intelligence report, gotten him charged up, and later sheepishly had to return to acknowledge the source was poor or there had been a mistake.) Thus, the NSC and President began receiving intelligence and diplomatic cables on developments abroad often as soon as, and often before, intelligence analysts. Henry Kissinger observes in his memoirs that, "It is a common myth that high officials are informed immediately about significant events.... It happens not infrequently -- much too frequently for the security adviser's emotional stability -- that even the President learns of a significant occurrence from the newspapers." He notes that President Nixon learned of the historic 1969 meeting in Beijing between Kosygin and Chou En-Lai when he read about it in The Washington Star.

One result of the establishment of the Situation Room was a significant diminution in the value of current intelligence publications that to this day has not been fully grasped by the Intelligence Community. Only analysis by experienced intelligence specialists lent (and lends) value to current intelligence provided the White House. Daily publications reporting purely factual information without trenchant analysis -- apart from Situation Reports on crises -- too often have been duplicative, too late and irrelevant. Thanks to the Situation Room, urgent information from abroad is often in the President's hands before reaching the DCI, other senior intelligence officials, and senior government officials.

Naturally, the President receives information through channels other than the early morning folder and the occasional cable during the day. For example, Presidents Ford, Carter and Reagan routinely received current and longrange intelligence analysis thrugh regular briefings by the DCI or intelligence specialists. All DCIs also have briefed the President and his senior advisers routinely in formal meetings of the National Security Council. Moreover, discussion at such meetings serves to convey information to the President from diverse sources. The President also receives abbreviated versions of intelligence assessments which are included in policy options papers.

Presidents Carter and Reagan saw fewer CIA assessments, National Intelligence Estimates, research papers and other longer range studies than either Presidents Ford or Nixon. This is due primarily to greater encouragement during the Ford and Nixon Administrations for the NSC Staff to prepare "Information Memoranda" summarizing for the President the salient points of much longer intelligence papers and attaching the full text. The only longer intelligence reports to reach Presidents Carter and Reagan were those the DCI delivered personally or the infrequent instances when the National Security Adviser forwarded an exceptional one for the President's reading. Thus, while under Nixon and Ford virtually no major intelligence study reached the President without an NSC cover memorandum summarizing it and perhaps making independent comments or judgments, many more reports reached their desks than reached Carter and Reagan. The NSC Staff was not encouraged to forward such studies, due in large measure of a reluctance to burden the President with additional -- and optional -- reading, a function of very different personal idiosyncracies.

In sum, each of the four Presidents I have observed has received through regular channels only a tiny portion of published intelligence and only a fraction even of analysis specifically prepared for senior policymakers. This has placed

a premium on the PDB -- an oft neglected opportunity -- and on the willingness of the DCI to give important assessments (published or oral) directly to the President or call them to the direct attention of the National Security Adviser. Disinterest or reluctance on the part of a DCI to take an activist, even aggressive role in this respect is a severe -- even irreparable -- handicap to ensuring that intelligence information and assessments are made available to or read by the President and the National Security Adviser.

WHAT PRESIDENTS THINK OF WHAT THEY GET

Perhaps in recognition of how busy Presidents are, for years there has been an adage at the White House that the absence of criticism should be regarded as praise. Along these lines, Presidential comments on intelligence assessments are so rare that we are understandably tempted to assume satisfaction with what is being received. Regrettably, however, this is doubtful. Many of the infrequent comments are critical, as illustrated at the outset of this article. I believe the negative perceptions of Intelligence of most Presidents and their advisers while in office or afterward are due to five factors:

-- The first and most significant is failure. Whether Nixon's unhappiness over misestimates of planned Soviet ICBM deployments or Carter's over failure to forecast the Iranian revolution or untimely upward revisions of North Korean troop strength, these Presidents -- with justification -- believed CIA assessments either contributed importantly to policy disasters or made them vulnerable to later criticism. Moreover, Presidents expect that for what they spend on intelligence, the end-product should be able to predict all manner of coups, upheavals, riots, intentions, military moves and the like with accuracy. Intellectually, they know most such specific events are incredibly hard to predict -- and that we are incredibly lucky when we do. Nevertheless, in the early morning hours when the National Security Adviser must repair to the President's study with the (usually) bad news about such events, the Chief Executive will not unnaturally wonder why his billions for intelligence do not spare him surprise. Further, Presidents want the kind of tactical intelligence that informs and facilitates day-to-day decisionmaking and where intelligence performance is hardest.

-- Second, Presidents do not like internal controversy in the Executive Branch, especially when it becomes public. Nor do Presidents welcome debate over basic facts once they have made a decision. Whether Johnson's aggravation with troublesome assessments on Vietnam, Nixon's over the public dispute between CIA and Defense whether the SS-9 was a MRV or MIRV, Carter's over energy estimates, or Reagan's over the Soviet gas pipeline, these and other intelligence debates over technology transfer, verification of arms control, Soviet defense spending, Soviet weapons programs and many more have caused controversy and weakened support for policy. The White House's general unease with CIA-originated unclassified analysis is rooted in this dislike for what is regarded as needless controversy. Our own citizens, not to mention foreign readers, cannot be expected to assume that a CIA publication does not reflect an official US Government view -- and this confusion is of concern to the White House and often a public relations and policy headache. Thus, to the extent intelligence results (in White House eyes) in internal government controversy, problems with the Congress, or embarrassing publicity, it will draw Presidential ire or at a minimum leave the Chief Magistrate with unflattering and enduring ill-will toward intelligence.

-- Third, Presidents do not welcome new intelligence assessments undercutting policies based on earlier assessments. As professionals, we are constantly revisiting important subjects as better and later information or improved analytical tools become available. When this results in changing the statistical basis for the US position in MBFR, substantially elevating estimates of North Korean forces at a time when the President is pressing to reduce US forces in South Korea, or "discovering" a Soviet brigade in Cuba, it is no revelation to observe that Presidents regard us less than fondly. Presidents do not like surprises, especially those that undermine policy. Intelligence is most often the bearer of such surprises -- and pays the price such messengers have suffered since antiquity.

-- Fourth, successive Administrations have generally regarded with skepticism the growing direct relationship between Congress and CIA above and beyond the actual oversight process. In recent years, the provision of great quantities of highly sensitive information and analysis to Members of Congress and their staffs has largely eliminated the Executive's longstanding advantage of a near monopoly of

information on foreign affairs and defense. The flow of information to the Hill has given the Congress a powerful tool in its quest for a greater voice in the making of foreign and defense policy vis-a-vis the Executive -- and Presidents cannot be indifferent to the fact that intelligence has provided Congress with that tool and that the White House is nearly helpless to blunt it except in very rare cases.

-- Finally, I believe Presidents and their national security teams usually have unrealistic expectations of what intelligence can do for them. Given the extraordinary capabilities of US intelligence for collecting and processing information -- and the cost, the uninitiated (including Presidents) often see intelligence as a magic bullet. When they too soon learn it is not, they are inevitably disappointed. Policymakers usually learn the hard way that while intelligence can tell them a great deal, it only rarely -- and usually in crises involving military forces -- provides the kind of unambiguous and timely information that can make day-to-day decisionmaking simpler and less risky. And intelligence officers encourage such exaggerated expectations occasionally by pretending a confidence in their judgments they cannot reasonably justify and by failing to be candid about the quality

> and reliability of their information and the possibility of other outcomes. Once bitten by an erroneous or misleading intelligence assessment, most White House officials -- including Presidents -- will be twice-shy about relying on or accepting unquestioningly a second.

Presidents and other principals up to the present time also have faulted the Agency for lack of imagination in anticipating the needs of the President and for insufficient aggressiveness in keeping itself informed on policy issues under consideration. Neither Presidents nor their Assistants for National Security Affairs have felt it their responsibility to keep senior Agency officials well informed in this regard, to provide day-to-day detailed tasking or to provide helpful feedback. The Agency had to depend for such guidance on what the DCI could pick up in high-level meetings and contacts -- and the skill and interest of different DCIs has varied greatly in both.

Indeed, this lack of feedback and, more broadly, intelligence policy guidance from the President (and other senior officials) in the four Administrations I have observed first hand has been a major obstacle to improved and more responsive intelligence performance. If Executive Branch and especially White House officials view Congressional influence

on intelligence strategy, priorities and investment as excessive, it is in part because policymakers in successive administrations have largely abdicated their own responsibilities in these areas. Changing the structure of the Intelligence Community or creating a so-called Director of National Intelligence at the White House will not remedy this situation (and would in my view do great harm). A President and his national security team (the Secretaries of State and Defense, and National Security Adviser) should view intelligence as an important asset in foreign policymaking and should be prepared to devote the time and energy to working with the DCI to provide useful guidance and direction to the collection and analysis efforts of CIA and the rest of US intelligence. Contrary to the view of those who are apprehensive over a close relationship between policymakers and intelligence, I believe it is not close enough -- that more interaction, feedback and direction as to strategy, priorities and requirements is critical to better performance, and that this can be accomplished without jeopardizing the independence and integrity of intelligence assessments and judgments.

Of the four Administrations, the Carter team worked most conscientiously at a high level to inform CIA of the analytical needs of the President and constructively to advise the Agency of perceived shortcomings in its analysis, especially with respect to subject, timing and form. President Carter personally communicated his concerns and criticisms.

Perhaps the most comprehensive White House guidance (and indication of the President's view) in recent years was provided by Dr. Brzezinski when he sent a memorandum to the DCI that made the following points:

-- Greater attention needs to be paid to clandestine collection targeted on the thinking and planning of key leaders or groups in important advanced and secondary countries, how they make policy decisions and how they will react to US decisions and those of other powers.

-- Political analyses should be focused more on problems of particular concern to the US government. Too many papers are on subjects peripheral to US interests or offer broad overviews not directly linked to particular problems, events or developments of concern to the US government.

-- There needs to be greater attention to the future. More papers are needed that briefly set forth facts and evidence and then conclude with a well-informed speculative essay on the implications for the future: "We expect and hope for thought-provoking, reasonable views of the future based on what you know about the past and present.... Analysts should not be timorous or bound by convention."

The Carter White House took other steps to ensure better communication of high-level substantive concerns as well as perceptions of analytical shortcomings. The Political Intelligence Working Group (the Deputy National Security Adviser, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, and later the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy), set up at the White House to organize remedial action in response to the President's November 1978 note, interpreted its charter broadly and worked to improve and better focus field reporting by State, CIA and Attaches; to improve the cover for CIA officers that is so critical to good reporting; to resolve bureaucratic impediments to good reporting; and a number of other issues aimed at improving analysis and making it more responsive. As part of the work of this informal group, senior staff representatives of Dr. Brzezinski met periodically with representatives of the Secretary of State and the DCI to review foreign developments or issues of current concern to the President and to provide feedback on intelligence coverage. I believe all involved would agree that these efforts had a salutary effect in improving communication between intelligence and the White House and thus improving intelligence support to the President.

A major innovation of the Reagan Administration in this regard was the President's decision in 1981 that his President's Daily Brief should be provided each day also to the Vice President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, the National Security Adviser and later the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They all were to have the same information as the President. Most significantly, primarily for security reasons, the PDB was to be delivered to these principals in person by a senior analytical officer of CIA, who would sit with the principal and then carry the document back to CIA. These arrangements provided an opportunity unique in US intelligence history for intelligence professionals to get immediate feedback from principals, their follow-up questions, tasking for further analysis and a sense of policymaker priorities and concerns. Intelligence support was thereby improved as was the understanding of intelligence officers of policy dynamics and reality of the decisionmaking arena which they were supporting. The principals were remarkably candid with their CIA briefers, and their confidence to my knowledge was never breached -- and the quality of intelligence support was greatly enhanced.

OVERCOMING CIA ISOLATION AND WHITE HOUSE SUSPICION

Presidents expect their intelligence service to provide timely, accurate and farseeing information and analysis. Thus, nearly all Presidential comments on the quality of intelligence are critical -- prompted by our failure to meet expectations. Indeed, all but one quote at the outset of this article was in response to a specific situation where intelligence was perceived to have failed to measure up. In short, Presidents often consider intelligence as much another problem bureaucracy to be dealt with and warily watched as it is a source of helpful information, insight and support. The dynamics of the relationship between the White House and CIA (not to mention the less familiar agencies of US intelligence) and the lack of understanding of each other's perspective and motives -- abetted by bureaucratic rivalries -- that separates them are usually unclear to the players themselves, and much less so to outside observers. While most journalists and academicians focus on alleged distortions of intelligence to support Administration policy, the players know that the relationship actually is usually dominated on key issues by disagreement and suspicion.

To the extent intelligence professionals are isolated (or isolate themselves) from White House/NSC officials and are

unresponsive to White House informational and analytical needs, this adversarial nature of the relationship will be emphasized and understanding of what we can and cannot do will be lacking. Thus, the DCI and his senior managers and the White House must both promote and maintain close personal ties between the White House and NSC officials from the President on down on the one hand, and the DCI and his principal subordinates on the other. Both must aggressively seek new ways to get intelligence information and assessments before the President, even while experimenting with old mechanisms, such as the PDB. White House procedures and relationships are always dynamic; accordingly, the search for new and better ways to serve the President must be constant.

Although the routine order of business and internal organization may vary from Administration to Administration, I would suggest several general rules:

-- Senior Intelligence, State, Defense and NSC officers must establish and maintain personal contact to ensure that intelligence officers are well informed as to the issues of concern to the President; policy matters under consideration in which intelligence analysis can make a contribution; and the overall foreign and defense affairs agenda so that the President's needs can be better anticipated.

-- The role of the DCI is central to understanding the President's needs and conveying analysis to him. DCI interest in analysis and aggressiveness in getting substantive matters before the President has varied greatly, though. Directors Webster, Casey and Turner have worked hard at the problem, as did some of their predecessors. Future DCIs must be persuaded that these undertakings also are central to their role as the President's principal intelligence adviser. Moreover, the DCI should assume a similar role with the National Security Adviser -- perhaps the best source of information on issues of topical interest to the President and the foreign affairs and defense agenda. Finally, the importance of routine, detailed feedback from policy meetings, briefings and conversations with the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, the National Security Adviser and Chairman, JCS must be impressed upon DCIs. Turner and Webster have done this effectively. Contrary to the views of some, we cannot properly do our work in splendid isolation.

-- The responsibility for making intelligence more relevant, timely and helpful is not that of the DCI and senior officials of the Intelligence Community alone.

> To be sure, intelligence managers at all levels must assume the burden of keeping up to date on events and policy issues relevant to their area of professional concern. Such awareness must infuse intelligence officers at all levels. Only when priority attention is given by all to the relevance and value of intelligence to the consumer from President to desk officer will intelligence analysis be better received and, in the end, be better. But, also, the President and his senior national security team, must take seriously their responsibility for the quality of intelligence support they get. They must be willing to make time for regular dialogue with intelligence specialists; for understanding intelligence capabilities, the impact of competing priorities for collection and analysis, and major investment decisions; and they must be willing to play an active role in guiding intelligence strategy and determining priorities.

The above "rules" apply to improving the quality and usefulness of intelligence to the President. They will not resolve the several causes of Presidential displeasure -- intelligence support of Congress, changing assessments that have policy implications, surprises, and so forth. Even here, however, there are mitigating steps that can be taken. For example:

-- Intelligence professionals should take the initiative to let the Security Adviser or the NSC Staff know when an estimate or other form of analysis will revise earlier assessments and have an impact on the President's policies. This would include, in particular, advance warning of new and important conclusions in military estimates.

-- Intelligence needs to develop a mechanism for better informing the White House about support provided to the Congress. The intelligence agencies are part of the Executive Branch; the DCI is appointed by and reports to the President. It is not improper or inappropriate for the Intelligence Community to keep the President's foreign affairs and Congressional affairs staff more completely and regularly advised of papers provided to the Congress, possibly controversial testimony or briefings, etc. Again, some of this has been done -- but a mere schedule of planned appearances or an occasional phone call are not enough. Keeping the Executive informed about CIA dealings with Congress is an important aspect of building Presidential confidence that we are not trying to undercut him or his policies by responding to legitimate Congressional requests.

-- Finally, ground rules should be developed for the disclosure of declassified intelligence. The current lack of a systematic approach contributes to leaks; to White House suspicion of obstructionism, bureaucratic gamesmanship or pursuit of a contrary policy agenda by intelligence professionals; and concern on the part of intelligence officers over the appearance (and sometimes the reality) of politicization of intelligence by White House or other policymaker-directed declassification of information. These are not new problems, but they all have worsened over the years. All, including many in Congress, agree intelligence information undergirding policy decisions must often be made available for public education or to gain support for national security decisions. There is widespread demand for unclassified publication of intelligence assessments or research on issues of moment to the country. But who should make these decisions? This is not the place to propose solutions, but the problem exists, affects the relationship between the President and the intelligence agencies on the one hand and the Executive and Legislative on the other.

The usefulness of CIA to Presidents in that area for which CIA was primarily established -- collection, analysis and

reporting of information -- for many years has often suffered because of self-imposed isolation by CIA and lack of interest, understanding and involvement by the President and his national security team. Self-promoting though true stories of extraordinary intelligence successes -- untempered by candor about problems in collection and analysis -- have in the past led to exaggerated expectations that are inevitably dashed. Lack of White House involvement has often left intelligence professionals adrift, and uncertain amid conflicting priorities and requirements, with the inevitable price in relevance and timeliness.

CIA and the Intelligence Community represent an extraordinary national asset. The rebuilding of the Community over the past decade has vastly augmented our collection and analysis capabilities and sharpened our skills. Congress has greatly enhanced its understanding of intelligence and shown a willingness to provide guidance and direction. It is time for the White House to assert its proper intelligence policy direction and guidance role and for CIA to welcome this role. Communication and dialogue on such broad matters must be improved. Only thus can intelligence and the use of it by the President be improved and the concomitant opportunity to better inform the policymaking process be seized.

The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
. D.C. 20505

15 August 1988

STAT TO: [redacted] A/DDI
Helene Boatner, D/LDA/DDI
Bill Baker, D/PAO
STAT [redacted] DD/PAO
Academic Coordinator
OD/ICS
Bill Donnelly, IG

I have been asked to do an article for The Washington Quarterly Fall issue on the use of intelligence at the White House. I have significantly revised an article I did for Studies in Intelligence in 1980.

Attached is the draft. Because the publication deadline is short, I would appreciate any comments, suggestions or criticisms by COB Thursday, 18 August.

STAT [redacted]

Robert M. Gates

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It was not always this way -- even in modern times. Before the Kennedy Administration, the President, his National Security Adviser and the NSC Staff relied almost entirely on

CIA and State to provide incoming current intelligence as soon as it was processed by their operations centers and circulated to substantive officials who could decide what to send to the White House. It was an approach that led to considerable competition, redundancy and placed a President at the mercy of the bureaucracies for confirmation.

This system was revolutionized, however, when President Kennedy created the White House Situation Room to which CIA, State, NSA and the Pentagon began to provide unprocessed intelligence information electronically -- an approach with its own readily apparent shortcomings. (Many a time, an over eager White House aide has run to a President with a dramatic but unevaluated intelligence report, gotten him charged up, and later sheepishly had to return to acknowledge the source was poor or there had been a mistake.) Thus, the NSC and President began receiving intelligence and diplomatic cables on developments abroad often as soon as, and often before, intelligence analysts. Henry Kissinger observes in his memoirs that, "It is a common myth that high officials are informed immediately about significant events.... It happens not infrequently -- much too frequently for the security adviser's emotional stability -- that even the President learns of a significant occurrence from the newspapers." He notes that President Nixon learned of the historic 1969 meeting in Beijing between Kosygin and Chou En-Lai when he read about it in The Washington Star.

One result of the establishment of the Situation Room was a significant diminution in the value of current intelligence publications that to this day has not been fully grasped by the Intelligence Community. Only analysis by experienced intelligence specialists lent (and lends) value to current intelligence provided the White House. Daily publications reporting purely factual information without trenchant analysis -- apart from Situation Reports on crises -- too often have been duplicative, too late and irrelevant. Thanks to the Situation Room, urgent information from abroad is often in the President's hands before reaching the DCI, other senior intelligence officials, and senior government officials.

Naturally, the President receives information through channels other than the early morning folder and the occasional cable during the day. For example, Presidents Ford, Carter and Reagan routinely received current and longrange intelligence analysis thrugh regular briefings by the DCI or intelligence specialists. All DCIs also have briefed the President and his senior advisers routinely in formal meetings of the National Security Council. Moreover, discussion at such meetings serves to convey information to the President from diverse sources. The President also receives abbreviated versions of intelligence assessments which are included in policy options papers.

Presidents Carter and Reagan saw fewer CIA assessments, National Intelligence Estimates, research papers and other longer range studies than either Presidents Ford or Nixon. This is due primarily to greater encouragement during the Ford and Nixon Administrations for the NSC Staff to prepare "Information Memoranda" summarizing for the President the salient points of much longer intelligence papers and attaching the full text. The only longer intelligence reports to reach Presidents Carter and Reagan were those the DCI delivered personally or the infrequent instances when the National Security Adviser forwarded an exceptional one for the President's reading. Thus, while under Nixon and Ford virtually no major intelligence study reached the President without an NSC cover memorandum summarizing it and perhaps making independent comments or judgments, many more reports reached their desks than reached Carter and Reagan. The NSC Staff was not encouraged to forward such studies, due in large measure of a reluctance to burden the President with additional -- and optional -- reading, a function of very different personal idiosyncracies.

In sum, each of the four Presidents I have observed has received through regular channels only a tiny portion of published intelligence and only a fraction even of analysis specifically prepared for senior policymakers. This has placed

a premium on the PDB -- an oft neglected opportunity -- and on the willingness of the DCI to give important assessments (published or oral) directly to the President or call them to the direct attention of the National Security Adviser. Disinterest or reluctance on the part of a DCI to take an activist, even aggressive role in this respect is a severe -- even irreparable -- handicap to ensuring that intelligence information and assessments are made available to or read by the President and the National Security Adviser.

WHAT PRESIDENTS THINK OF WHAT THEY GET

Perhaps in recognition of how busy Presidents are, for years there has been an adage at the White House that the absence of criticism should be regarded as praise. Along these lines, Presidential comments on intelligence assessments are so rare that we are understandably tempted to assume satisfaction with what is being received. Regrettably, however, this is doubtful. Many of the infrequent comments are critical, as illustrated at the outset of this article. I believe the negative perceptions of Intelligence of most Presidents and their advisers while in office or afterward are due to five factors:

-- The first and most significant is failure. Whether Nixon's unhappiness over misestimates of planned Soviet ICBM deployments or Carter's over failure to forecast the Iranian revolution or untimely upward revisions of North Korean troop strength, these Presidents -- with justification -- believed CIA assessments either contributed importantly to policy disasters or made them vulnerable to later criticism. Moreover, Presidents expect that for what they spend on intelligence, the end-product should be able to predict all manner of coups, upheavals, riots, intentions, military moves and the like with accuracy. Intellectually, they know most such specific events are incredibly hard to predict -- and that we are incredibly lucky when we do. Nevertheless, in the early morning hours when the National Security Adviser must repair to the President's study with the (usually) bad news about such events, the Chief Executive will not unnaturally wonder why his billions for intelligence do not spare him surprise. Further, Presidents want the kind of tactical intelligence that informs and facilitates day-to-day decisionmaking and where intelligence performance is hardest.

-- Second, Presidents do not like internal controversy in the Executive Branch, especially when it becomes public. Nor do Presidents welcome debate over basic facts once they have made a decision. Whether Johnson's aggravation with troublesome assessments on Vietnam, Nixon's over the public dispute between CIA and Defense whether the SS-9 was a MRV or MIRV, Carter's over energy estimates, or Reagan's over the Soviet gas pipeline, these and other intelligence debates over technology transfer, verification of arms control, Soviet defense spending, Soviet weapons programs and many more have caused controversy and weakened support for policy. The White House's general unease with CIA-originated unclassified analysis is rooted in this dislike for what is regarded as needless controversy. Our own citizens, not to mention foreign readers, cannot be expected to assume that a CIA publication does not reflect an official US Government view -- and this confusion is of concern to the White House and often a public relations and policy headache. Thus, to the extent intelligence results (in White House eyes) in internal government controversy, problems with the Congress, or embarrassing publicity, it will draw Presidential ire or at a minimum leave the Chief Magistrate with unflattering and enduring ill-will toward intelligence.

-- Third, Presidents do not welcome new intelligence assessments undercutting policies based on earlier assessments. As professionals, we are constantly revisiting important subjects as better and later information or improved analytical tools become available. When this results in changing the statistical basis for the US position in MBFR, substantially elevating estimates of North Korean forces at a time when the President is pressing to reduce US forces in South Korea, or "discovering" a Soviet brigade in Cuba, it is no revelation to observe that Presidents regard us less than fondly. Presidents do not like surprises, especially those that undermine policy. Intelligence is most often the bearer of such surprises -- and pays the price such messengers have suffered since antiquity.

-- Fourth, successive Administrations have generally regarded with skepticism the growing direct relationship between Congress and CIA above and beyond the actual oversight process. In recent years, the provision of great quantities of highly sensitive information and analysis to Members of Congress and their staffs has largely eliminated the Executive's longstanding advantage of a near monopoly of

information on foreign affairs and defense. The flow of information to the Hill has given the Congress a powerful tool in its quest for a greater voice in the making of foreign and defense policy vis-a-vis the Executive -- and Presidents cannot be indifferent to the fact that intelligence has provided Congress with that tool and that the White House is nearly helpless to blunt it except in very rare cases.

-- Finally, I believe Presidents and their national security teams usually have unrealistic expectations of what intelligence can do for them. Given the extraordinary capabilities of US intelligence for collecting and processing information -- and the cost, the uninitiated (including Presidents) often see intelligence as a magic bullet. When they too soon learn it is not, they are inevitably disappointed. Policymakers usually learn the hard way that while intelligence can tell them a great deal, it only rarely -- and usually in crises involving military forces -- provides the kind of unambiguous and timely information that can make day-to-day decisionmaking simpler and less risky. And intelligence officers encourage such exaggerated expectations occasionally by pretending a confidence in their judgments they cannot reasonably justify and by failing to be candid about the quality

and reliability of their information and the possibility of other outcomes. Once bitten by an erroneous or misleading intelligence assessment, most White House officials -- including Presidents -- will be twice-shy about relying on or accepting unquestioningly a second.

Presidents and other principals up to the present time also have faulted the Agency for lack of imagination in anticipating the needs of the President and for insufficient aggressiveness in keeping itself informed on policy issues under consideration. Neither Presidents nor their Assistants for National Security Affairs have felt it their responsibility to keep senior Agency officials well informed in this regard, to provide day-to-day detailed tasking or to provide helpful feedback. The Agency had to depend for such guidance on what the DCI could pick up in high-level meetings and contacts -- and the skill and interest of different DCIs has varied greatly in both.

Indeed, this lack of feedback and, more broadly, intelligence policy guidance from the President (and other senior officials) in the four Administrations I have observed first hand has been a major obstacle to improved and more responsive intelligence performance. If Executive Branch and especially White House officials view Congressional influence

on intelligence strategy, priorities and investment as excessive, it is in part because policymakers in successive administrations have largely abdicated their own responsibilities in these areas. Changing the structure of the Intelligence Community or creating a so-called Director of National Intelligence at the White House will not remedy this situation (and would in my view do great harm). A President and his national security team (the Secretaries of State and Defense, and National Security Adviser) should view intelligence as an important asset in foreign policymaking and should be prepared to devote the time and energy to working with the DCI to provide useful guidance and direction to the collection and analysis efforts of CIA and the rest of US intelligence. Contrary to the view of those who are apprehensive over a close relationship between policymakers and intelligence, I believe it is not close enough -- that more interaction, feedback and direction as to strategy, priorities and requirements is critical to better performance, and that this can be accomplished without jeopardizing the independence and integrity of intelligence assessments and judgments.

Of the four Administrations, the Carter team worked most conscientiously at a high level to inform CIA of the analytical needs of the President and constructively to advise the Agency of perceived shortcomings in its analysis, especially with respect to subject, timing and form. President Carter personally communicated his concerns and criticisms.

Perhaps the most comprehensive White House guidance (and indication of the President's view) in recent years was provided by Dr. Brzezinski when he sent a memorandum to the DCI that made the following points:

-- Greater attention needs to be paid to clandestine collection targeted on the thinking and planning of key leaders or groups in important advanced and secondary countries, how they make policy decisions and how they will react to US decisions and those of other powers.

-- Political analyses should be focused more on problems of particular concern to the US government. Too many papers are on subjects peripheral to US interests or offer broad overviews not directly linked to particular problems, events or developments of concern to the US government.

-- There needs to be greater attention to the future. More papers are needed that briefly set forth facts and evidence and then conclude with a well-informed speculative essay on the implications for the future: "We expect and hope for thought-provoking, reasonable views of the future based on what you know about the past and present.... Analysts should not be timorous or bound by convention."

The Carter White House took other steps to ensure better communication of high-level substantive concerns as well as perceptions of analytical shortcomings. The Political Intelligence Working Group (the Deputy National Security Adviser, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, and later the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy), set up at the White House to organize remedial action in response to the President's November 1978 note, interpreted its charter broadly and worked to improve and better focus field reporting by State, CIA and Attaches; to improve the cover for CIA officers that is so critical to good reporting; to resolve bureaucratic impediments to good reporting; and a number of other issues aimed at improving analysis and making it more responsive. As part of the work of this informal group, senior staff representatives of Dr. Brzezinski met periodically with representatives of the Secretary of State and the DCI to review foreign developments or issues of current concern to the President and to provide feedback on intelligence coverage. I believe all involved would agree that these efforts had a salutary effect in improving communication between intelligence and the White House and thus improving intelligence support to the President.

A major innovation of the Reagan Administration in this regard was the President's decision in 1981 that his President's Daily Brief should be provided each day also to the Vice President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, the National Security Adviser and later the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They all were to have the same information as the President. Most significantly, primarily for security reasons, the PDB was to be delivered to these principals in person by a senior analytical officer of CIA, who would sit with the principal and then carry the document back to CIA. These arrangements provided an opportunity unique in US intelligence history for intelligence professionals to get immediate feedback from principals, their follow-up questions, tasking for further analysis and a sense of policymaker priorities and concerns. Intelligence support was thereby improved as was the understanding of intelligence officers of policy dynamics and reality of the decisionmaking arena which they were supporting. The principals were remarkably candid with their CIA briefers, and their confidence to my knowledge was never breached -- and the quality of intelligence support was greatly enhanced.

OVERCOMING CIA ISOLATION AND WHITE HOUSE SUSPICION

Presidents expect their intelligence service to provide timely, accurate and farseeing information and analysis. Thus, nearly all Presidential comments on the quality of intelligence are critical -- prompted by our failure to meet expectations. Indeed, all but one quote at the outset of this article was in response to a specific situation where intelligence was perceived to have failed to measure up. In short, Presidents often consider intelligence as much another problem bureaucracy to be dealt with and warily watched as it is a source of helpful information, insight and support. The dynamics of the relationship between the White House and CIA (not to mention the less familiar agencies of US intelligence) and the lack of understanding of each other's perspective and motives -- abetted by bureaucratic rivalries -- that separates them are usually unclear to the players themselves, and much less so to outside observers. While most journalists and academicians focus on alleged distortions of intelligence to support Administration policy, the players know that the relationship actually is usually dominated on key issues by disagreement and suspicion.

To the extent intelligence professionals are isolated (or isolate themselves) from White House/NSC officials and are

unresponsive to White House informational and analytical needs, this adversarial nature of the relationship will be emphasized and understanding of what we can and cannot do will be lacking. Thus, the DCI and his senior managers and the White House must both promote and maintain close personal ties between the White House and NSC officials from the President on down on the one hand, and the DCI and his principal subordinates on the other. Both must aggressively seek new ways to get intelligence information and assessments before the President, even while experimenting with old mechanisms, such as the PDB. White House procedures and relationships are always dynamic; accordingly, the search for new and better ways to serve the President must be constant.

Although the routine order of business and internal organization may vary from Administration to Administration, I would suggest several general rules:

-- Senior Intelligence, State, Defense and NSC officers must establish and maintain personal contact to ensure that intelligence officers are well informed as to the issues of concern to the President; policy matters under consideration in which intelligence analysis can make a contribution; and the overall foreign and defense affairs agenda so that the President's needs can be better anticipated.

-- The role of the DCI is central to understanding the President's needs and conveying analysis to him. DCI interest in analysis and aggressiveness in getting substantive matters before the President has varied greatly, though. Directors Webster, Casey and Turner have worked hard at the problem, as did some of their predecessors. Future DCIs must be persuaded that these undertakings also are central to their role as the President's principal intelligence adviser. Moreover, the DCI should assume a similar role with the National Security Adviser -- perhaps the best source of information on issues of topical interest to the President and the foreign affairs and defense agenda. Finally, the importance of routine, detailed feedback from policy meetings, briefings and conversations with the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, the National Security Adviser and Chairman, JCS must be impressed upon DCIs. Turner and Webster have done this effectively. Contrary to the views of some, we cannot properly do our work in splendid isolation.

-- The responsibility for making intelligence more relevant, timely and helpful is not that of the DCI and senior officials of the Intelligence Community alone.

To be sure, intelligence managers at all levels must assume the burden of keeping up to date on events and policy issues relevant to their area of professional concern. Such awareness must infuse intelligence officers at all levels. Only when priority attention is given by all to the relevance and value of intelligence to the consumer from President to desk officer will intelligence analysis be better received and, in the end, be better. But, also, the President and his senior national security team, must take seriously their responsibility for the quality of intelligence support they get. They must be willing to make time for regular dialogue with intelligence specialists; for understanding intelligence capabilities, the impact of competing priorities for collection and analysis, and major investment decisions; and they must be willing to play an active role in guiding intelligence strategy and determining priorities.

The above "rules" apply to improving the quality and usefulness of intelligence to the President. They will not resolve the several causes of Presidential displeasure -- intelligence support of Congress, changing assessments that have policy implications, surprises, and so forth. Even here, however, there are mitigating steps that can be taken. For example:

-- Intelligence professionals should take the initiative to let the Security Adviser or the NSC Staff know when an estimate or other form of analysis will revise earlier assessments and have an impact on the President's policies. This would include, in particular, advance warning of new and important conclusions in military estimates.

-- Intelligence needs to develop a mechanism for better informing the White House about support provided to the Congress. The intelligence agencies are part of the Executive Branch; the DCI is appointed by and reports to the President. It is not improper or inappropriate for the Intelligence Community to keep the President's foreign affairs and Congressional affairs staff more completely and regularly advised of papers provided to the Congress, possibly controversial testimony or briefings, etc. Again, some of this has been done -- but a mere schedule of planned appearances or an occasional phone call are not enough. Keeping the Executive informed about CIA dealings with Congress is an important aspect of building Presidential confidence that we are not trying to undercut him or his policies by responding to legitimate Congressional requests.

-- Finally, ground rules should be developed for the disclosure of declassified intelligence. The current lack of a systematic approach contributes to leaks; to White House suspicion of obstructionism, bureaucratic gamesmanship or pursuit of a contrary policy agenda by intelligence professionals; and concern on the part of intelligence officers over the appearance (and sometimes the reality) of politicization of intelligence by White House or other policymaker-directed declassification of information. These are not new problems, but they all have worsened over the years. All, including many in Congress, agree intelligence information undergirding policy decisions must often be made available for public education or to gain support for national security decisions. There is widespread demand for unclassified publication of intelligence assessments or research on issues of moment to the country. But who should make these decisions? This is not the place to propose solutions, but the problem exists, affects the relationship between the President and the intelligence agencies on the one hand and the Executive and Legislative on the other.

The usefulness of CIA to Presidents in that area for which CIA was primarily established -- collection, analysis and

reporting of information -- for many years has often suffered because of self-imposed isolation by CIA and lack of interest, understanding and involvement by the President and his national security team. Self-promoting though true stories of extraordinary intelligence successes -- untempered by candor about problems in collection and analysis -- have in the past led to exaggerated expectations that are inevitably dashed. Lack of White House involvement has often left intelligence professionals adrift, and uncertain amid conflicting priorities and requirements, with the inevitable price in relevance and timeliness.

CIA and the Intelligence Community represent an extraordinary national asset. The rebuilding of the Community over the past decade has vastly augmented our collection and analysis capabilities and sharpened our skills. Congress has greatly enhanced its understanding of intelligence and shown a willingness to provide guidance and direction. It is time for the White House to assert its proper intelligence policy direction and guidance role and for CIA to welcome this role. Communication and dialogue on such broad matters must be improved. Only thus can intelligence and the use of it by the President be improved and the concomitant opportunity to better inform the policymaking process be seized.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

ROUTING SLIP

TO:		ACTION	INFO	DATE	INITIAL
1	DCI				
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Remarks

STAT

Executive Secretary

14 JUL 88

Date

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The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

ER 2587/2-88

Washington, D.C. 20505

July 14, 1988

Mr. Brad Roberts
Executive Editor
The Washington Quarterly
1800 K Street, N.W., Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Mr. Roberts:

Enclosed is the declassified version of my Studies in Intelligence article on the use of intelligence analysis at the White House. It was published in the winter of 1980.

I have reviewed it and, depending upon the time available, could update it. (There are a number of things that I would change or revise from this more distant vantage point and I could include some material relating to the Reagan Administration.) I note also that there are some typographical and other errors that would need to be corrected.

Why don't you take a look at it and either write back or call me to discuss further. I would appreciate no further copies being made and no use of the article or any part of it without the revisions I described above and my review of the final version. I will be leaving town the end of next week. If you can get back to me before next Friday, I may be able to do some work on it while I am out of town.

Regards

STAT [redacted]

Robert M. Gates

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THE WASHINGTON QUARTERLY

Office of the Editor

July 1, 1988

Mr. Robert Gates
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Mr. Gates:

Thank you very much for your letter of June 22 following up my invitation to you to contribute an essay to The Washington Quarterly. I would like to pursue your suggestion.

Your existing but unpublished essay on the use of intelligence at the White House could make a strong complement to the essays by Anne Armstrong and Roy Godson. We are not at all averse to having an author rework existing material, so long as it has not been published elsewhere.

How do we proceed? Perhaps it would be best if you sent me a copy of the existing draft and then we could trade ideas about how it might be revised and updated and in what timeframe.

Thank you again for your interest in contributing an essay to our pages.

Best regards,

Brad Roberts
Executive Editor

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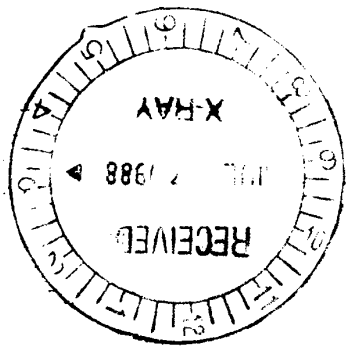

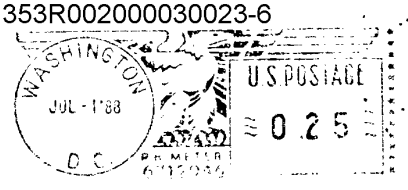

Mr. Robert Gates
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C.

20505

"Intelligence is like money and love: there is never enough."

— A Senior White House Official

AN OPPORTUNITY UNFULFILLED

The Use and Perceptions of Intelligence Analysis at the White House

Robert M. Gates

OUR GOAL

"Collection, processing and analysis all are directed at one goal—producing accurate reliable intelligence.... Who are the customers who get this finished product? At the very top, of the list is the President. He is, of course, the Central Intelligence Agency's most important customer."

—Intelligence: The Acme of Skill
(CIA Information Pamphlet)

And what have our most important customers and their principal assistants had to say about how well we achieve that goal?

"I am not satisfied with the quality of our political intelligence."

— Jimmy Carter, 1978

"What the hell do those clowns do out there in Langley?"

— Richard Nixon, 1970

"In the 1960s and early 1970s, for eleven years in a row, the Central Intelligence Agency underestimated the number of missiles the Russians would deploy; at the same time the CIA also underestimated the totality of the Soviet program effort and its ambitious goals.... Thanks in part to this intelligence blunder we will find ourselves looking down the nuclear barrel in the mid-1980s."

— Richard Nixon, 1980

"CIA Director McCone ... made recommendations for checking and improving the quality of intelligence reporting. I promptly accepted the suggestions...."

— Lyndon Johnson, Memoirs

"During the rush of ... events in the final days of 1958, the Central Intelligence Agency suggested for the first time that a Castro victory might not be in the interests of the United States."

— Dwight Eisenhower, Memoirs

"The Agency usually erred on the side of the interpretation fashionable in the Washington Establishment.... The analytical side of the CIA ... generally reflected the most liberal school of thought in the government.... When warnings

become too routine they lose all significance; when reports are not called specifically to the attention of the top leadership they are lost in bureaucratic background noise, particularly since for every admonitory report one can probably find also its opposite in the files."

— Henry Kissinger, Memoirs

"During the past year, I have seen no clandestine reporting from Soviet sources that significantly influenced my judgment on how to deal with the Soviet Union.... The Intelligence Community must find ways to sharpen and improve its analysis.... We see too many papers on subjects peripheral to our interests.... Too often the papers we see explain or review events in the past and give only a bare nod to the future."

— Zbignier Brzezinski, 1978

During the darkest days of revelations about CIA by the Rockefeller Commission and the Church and Pike Committees, professional intelligence officers clung to the notion that, whatever misdeeds might have occurred, throughout its history CIA had rendered exceptional service to American Presidents by producing the finest analysis based on the best human and technical sources in the world. We judged our contribution to White House decisionmaking on issues of moment and events great and small, and found it outstanding. This contribution made us, in our view, indispensable and cemented a special relationship between several Presidents and CIA. Have we been so long and so deeply mistaken? Has an entire Agency of people who specialize in political nuance, subtle signals and human relationships deluded itself and over a generation totally miscalculated the value of its work to six very different Presidents? The above quotations would suggest so. After all, they *did* in fact say those terrible things about us—and still are.

The way intelligence is processed at the White House and how it is received and regarded behind the scenes has never been clear to CIA, even at senior levels, except in broadest outline. It is time to lift a corner of that curtain in order that intelligence professionals might better understand what happens at the White House to the product of our collection and analysis, what the President and his Assistant for National Security Affairs expect, what they see, how it is processed, how they react—and, finally, whether they really mean what they say about us.

SETTING THE SCENE

To understand how intelligence is used and regarded at the White House first requires an understanding of the context in which it is received. The sheer volume of paperwork addressed to the President is staggering. Hundreds of federal employees in more than 200 agencies seek to draw his attention to this or that program, proposal or vital piece of information. An astonishing amount of their work survives departmental review and finds its way to the White House. There these papers join a river of correspondence to the President from countless consultants, academics, think tanks, political contacts, family and friends, political supporters, journalists, authors, foreign leaders, and concerned citizens. (Lest you think such correspondence can easily be disregarded, it is my view that most Presidents often attach as much—if not more—credibility to the views of family, (old) friends and private contacts as they do to those of executive agencies. Vice President Rockefeller once asked my office if Denmark really was planning to sell Greenland. Wondering all the while if he was in the market, we confirmed with CIA that this rumor from a private source was untrue. But Rockefeller had taken it seriously.)

It is the responsibility of the Domestic Policy Staff, the NSC, other Executive offices, and the White House Office itself to impose order on this avalanche of pulp and to reduce it to proportions manageable by someone who works 15-16 hours a day, often seven days a week. The NSC alone processes 7,000-10,000 "action" papers a year—not including intelligence analyses or other purely "informational" papers. Dr. Brzezinski once asked me to calculate how many pages of reading he sent to the President weekly; the total averaged many hundreds of pages—and among White House offices the NSC is among the most stringent with respect to the length and number of items going to the President. These, then, are the first hurdles that an intelligence product faces: a president with a heavy schedule, inundated by paper and demands for decisions, surrounded by senior assistants who have as a main role trying to keep that President from being overwhelmed by paper; and a President with vast and varied non-intelligence sources upon which he also relies and in which he often has considerable confidence.

WHAT HE GETS

The President routinely receives only one intelligence product that is not summarized or commented upon by someone outside the Community: *The President's Daily Brief*. He is handed this by his National Security Adviser early every morning, along with a package that has varied little from President to President: a few (3-6) State and CIA cables of special significance; occasionally a typescript, sensitive intelligence report from the DCI; selected wire service items; State or CIA situation reports (never both) if there is a crisis abroad; and often from the NSC and State/INR morning cable summaries. Contrary to what is commonly believed, this is the only regularly scheduled package of current intelligence the President receives during the day. However, through the course of the day, the National Security Adviser keeps the President apprised of significant developments overseas and may handcarry especially important cables directly to the President. In a crisis, the flow of information increases. More analysis and reports will be given to the President. He will receive current intelligence orally in meetings with his senior White House, State, Defense and Intelligence advisers, as well as from the media—often the first source of information. Nevertheless, on a day-to-day basis apart from the *PDB*, successive Presidents generally have seen only that current intelligence selected by the National Security Adviser, who works to make that morning package as succinct and small as he responsibly can.

It was not always this way—even in modern times. Before the Kennedy Administration, the President, his National Security Adviser and the NSC Staff relied almost entirely on CIA and State to provide incoming current intelligence as soon as it was processed by their operations centers and circulated to substantive officials who could decide what to send to the White House. This system was revolutionized, however, when President Kennedy created the White House Situation Room to which CIA, State, NSA and the Pentagon began to provide unprocessed intelligence information electronically. Thus, the NSC and President began receiving intelligence and diplomatic cables on developments abroad often as soon as, and often before, intelligence analysts. (The present system is not without flaws, however. Henry Kissinger observes in his memoirs, for expample, that, "*It is a common myth that high officials are informed immediately about significant events. . . . It happens not infrequently—much too frequently for the security adviser's emotional stability—that even the President learns of a significant occurrence from the newspapers.*" He notes that President Nixon learned of the historic 1969 meeting in Beijing between Kosygin and Chou En-Lai when he read about it in *The Washington Star*. One result of the establishment of the Situation Room was a significant diminution in the value of current intelligence publications that to this day has not been fully grasped by the

Intelligence Community. Only analysis by experienced intelligence specialists lent (and lends) value to current intelligence provided the White House. Daily publications reporting purely factual information without trenchant analysis—apart from Situation Reports on crises—too often have been duplicative, too late and irrelevant. Thanks to the Situation Room, urgent information from abroad is often in the President's hands before reaching the DCI, other senior intelligence officials, and sometimes the media.

Naturally, the President receives information through channels other than the early morning folder and the occasional cable during the day. For example, President Carter routinely received current and longrange intelligence analysis through regular briefings by the DCI. Such frequent sessions specifically devoted to analysis were an innovation under Carter and provided an opportunity that did not exist before 1977 for interchange among the President, Vice President, Secretary of State and National Security Adviser on substantive intelligence issues. DCI Bush on occasion gave President Ford personal analytical briefings and, of course, analytical matters would often come up spontaneously during Bush's twice-weekly meetings with the President. All DCIs also have briefed the President and his senior advisers routinely in formal meetings of the National Security Council. Moreover, discussion at such meetings serves to convey information to the President from diverse sources. The President also receives abbreviated versions of intelligence assessments which are included in policy options papers.

President Carter saw fewer CIA assessments, NIEs, research papers and other longer range studies than either Presidents Ford or Nixon. This is due primarily to greater encouragement during the latter two Administrations for the NSC Staff to prepare "Information Memoranda" summarizing for the President the salient points of such longer intelligence papers and attaching the full text. The only longer intelligence reports to reach President Carter were those the DCI delivered personally or the infrequent instances when the National Security Adviser forwarded an exceptional one for the President's reading. Thus, while under Nixon and Ford virtually no major intelligence study reached the President without an NSC cover memorandum summarizing it and perhaps making independent comments or judgments, many more reports reached their desks than reached Mr. Carter. The NSC Staff was not encouraged to forward such studies, due in large measure to reluctance to burden the President with additional—and optional—reading: again, the consequence of the volume of paper coming into the White House. This was due in part to President Carter's penchant to read an entire paper—not just the summary—and the consequent effort to avoid diverting him with "interesting" versus "essential" reading.

In sum, each of the last three Presidents has received through regular channels only a tiny portion of published intelligence and only a fraction even of analysis specifically prepared for senior policymakers. This has placed a premium on the *PDB*—an opportunity neglected until recently—and on the willingness of the DCI to give important assessments (published or oral) directly to the President or call them to the direct attention of the National Security Adviser. (Even personal transmittal slips to the latter are of little value since as everyone resorts to this device and thus render it too common to be effective.) Disinterest or reluctance on the part of a DCI to take an activist role is a severe—even irreparable—handicap to ensuring that intelligence assessments are read by the President and the National Security Adviser.

WHAT PRESIDENTS THINK OF WHAT THEY GET

Perhaps in recognition of how busy Presidents are for years there has been an adage at the White House that the absence of criticism should be regarded as praise. Along these lines, Presidential comment on intelligence assessments are so rare that we

are understandably tempted to assume satisfaction with what is being received. Regrettably, however, this is doubtful. Many of the infrequent comments we do receive are critical and, more importantly, Presidents have repeatedly (during or after their term of office) expressed general dissatisfaction with broad aspects of intelligence analysis—as for example President Carter did in his well-known note to the Secretary of State, DCI, and National Security Adviser in November 1978, and as President Nixon did both while in office and in his memoirs. Mr Nixon often criticized CIA analysis of the Soviet Union and Europe for not being sufficiently "tough-minded." Kissinger also presumably reflected both Nixon's and Ford's dissatisfaction when he would assail CIA's failure to predict various developments or events abroad, or for preparing "flabby" assessments that he regarded as written from the standpoint of a bureaucrat of the subject country rather than of the United States Government.

These and other principals—note the introductory quotes of this article—also have faulted the Agency for lack of imagination in anticipating the needs of the President and for insufficient aggressiveness in keeping itself informed on policy issues under consideration. Neither these Presidents nor their Assistants for National Security Affairs felt it their responsibility to keep senior Agency officials well informed in this regard, to provide day-to-day detailed tasking or to provide helpful feedback. The Agency had to depend for such guidance on what the DCI could pick up in high-level meetings and contacts—and the skill and interest of different DCIs has varied greatly in both.

Of the three Administrations I served at the NSC, the Carter team worked most conscientiously to inform CIA of the analytical needs of the President and constructively to advise the Agency of perceived shortcomings in its analysis, especially with respect to subject, timing and form. President Carter personally communicated his concerns and criticisms.

Pehaps the most comprehensive White House guidance (and indication of the President's views) in recent years was provided by Dr. Brzezinski in January 1978, when he sent a memorandum to the DCI that made the following points:

— Greater attention needs to be paid to clandestine collection targeted on the thinking and planning of key leaders or groups in important advanced and secondary countries, how they make policy decisions and how they will react to U.S. decisions and those of other powers.

— Political analyses should be focused more on problems of particular concern to the U.S. Government. Too many papers are on subjects peripheral to U.S. interests or offer broad overviews not directly linked to particular problems, events or developments of concern to the U.S. Government.

— There needs to be greater attention to the future. More papers are needed that briefly set forth facts and evidence and then conclude with a well-informed speculative essay on the implications for the future: "We expect and hope for thought-provoking, reasonable views of the future based on what you know about the past and present. . . . Analysts should not be timorous or bound by convention."

— Chiefs of Station often have great understanding of the situation in their host countries and should be encouraged to submit more frequent field assessments.

The Carter White House took other steps to ensure better communication of high-level substantive concerns as well as perceptions of analytical shortcomings. The Political Intelligence Working Group, set up to organize remedial action in response to the President's November 1978 note, interpreted its charter broadly and worked to

improve and better focus field reporting by State, CIA and Attaches; to improve cover so critical to good reporting; to resolve bureaucratic impediments to good reporting; and a number of other issues aimed at improving analysis and making it more responsive. As part of the work of this informal group, senior staff representatives of Dr. Brzezinski met periodically with representatives of the Secretary of State and the DCI to review foreign developments or issues of current concern to the President and to provide feedback on intelligence coverage. I believe all involved would agree that these efforts had a salutary effect in improving communication between intelligence and the White House and thus improving intelligence support to the President.

Presidents and their senior advisers will never be fully content with intelligence support and analysis. First, and despite occasional protestations to the contrary, Presidents expect that for what they spend on intelligence, the end-product should be able to predict all manner of coups, upheavals, riots, intentions, military moves and the like with accuracy. Intellectually, they know most such specific events are incredibly hard to predict—and that we are incredibly lucky when we do. Nevertheless, in the early morning hours when the National Security Adviser must repair to the President's study with the (usually) bad news about such events, the Chief Executive will not unnaturally wonder why his billions for intelligence do not spare him surprise.

Second, Presidents do not like internal controversy in the Executive Branch—especially if it becomes public. And, from time to time, intelligence analyses provoke dispute, often in public. DCI Helms' disagreement with Secretary of Defense Laird a decade ago before Congress on whether the SS-9 was a MRV or a MIRV is a case in point. Internal Executive Branch disputes over energy estimates, technology transfer, Soviet civil defense, and verification of aspects of SALT are others. Such controversies have become more frequent as disputes to contain within the Executive Branch become harder by virtue of greater Congressional access, journalistic aggressiveness and leaks. The White House's general unease with unclassified CIA analysis is rooted in this dislike for what is regarded as needless controversy. Our own citizens, not to mention foreign readers, cannot be expected to assume that a CIA publication does not reflect an official U.S. Government view—and this confusion is of concern to the White House and often a public relations and policy headache. Thus, to the extent intelligence analysis results (in White House eyes) in internal government controversy, problems with the Congress, or embarrassing publicity, it will draw Presidential ire or at a minimum leave the Chief Magistrate with unflattering and enduring feelings toward intelligence.

Third, Presidents do not welcome new intelligence assessments undercutting policies based on earlier assessments. As professionals, we are constantly revisiting important subjects as better and later information or improved analytical tools become available. When this results in changing the statistical basis for the U.S. position in MBFR, substantially elevating estimates of North Korean forces at a time when the President is pressing to reduce U.S. forces in South Korea, or "discovering" a Soviet brigade in Cuba, it is no revelation to observe that Presidents regard us less than fondly. Presidents do not like surprises, especially those that undermine policy. Intelligence is most often the bearer of such surprises—and pays the price such messengers have suffered since antiquity.

Finally, successive Administrations have generally regarded with skeptical the growing direct relationship between Congress and CIA above and beyond the actual oversight process. In recent years, the provision of great quantities of highly sensitive information and analysis to Members of Congress and their staffs has eroded the Executive's longstanding advantage of a near monopoly of information on foreign affairs and defense. The flow of information to the Hill has given the Congress a

powerful tool in its quest for a greater voice in the making of foreign and defense policy vis-a-vis the Executive—and Presidents cannot be indifferent to the fact that intelligence has provided Congress with that tool and that the White House is nearly helpless to blunt it except in very rare cases.

OVERCOMING ISOLATION (OURS) AND SUSPICION (THEIRS)

Presidents expect their intelligence service to provide timely, accurate and farseeing analysis. Thus, nearly all Presidential comments on the quality of intelligence are critical—prompted by our failure to meet expectations. Indeed, all but one quote at the outset of this article was in response to a *specific* situation where intelligence was perceived to have failed to measure up. In short, Presidents often consider intelligence as much another problem bureaucracy to be dealt with and warily watched as it is a source of helpful information, insight and support.

To the extent intelligence professionals isolate themselves from White House/NSC officials and are unresponsive to White House *analytical* needs, this adversarial nature of the relationship will be emphasized and understanding of what we can and cannot do will be lacking. Thus, the Intelligence Community must take the initiative to establish and maintain close personal ties to White House and NSC officials from the President on down. It must also aggressively seek new ways to get the maximum amount of analysis before the President, even while experimenting with old mechanisms, such as the *PDB*. White House procedures and relationships are always dynamic; accordingly, we must always be searching for new and better ways to serve our principal customer.

Although the routine order of business and internal organization may vary greatly from Administration to Administration, I would suggest several general rules:

— Senior intelligence officials must establish and maintain a network of personal contacts in the NSC Staff and the immediate office of the National Security Adviser to ensure that we are well informed as to the issues of concern to the President; policy matters under consideration in which intelligence analysis can make a contribution; and the overall foreign and defense affairs agenda so that we can anticipate the President's needs.

  • For intelligence to be useful, it must be timely. Insofar as policy issues, foreign visitors and such are involved, often a day or two makes the difference between a vital or irrelevant contribution.

  • Periodic visits to NSC staffers on a quarterly, semiannual, or annual basis to seek guidance during the coming period is worse than useless; they can be misleading and eventually waste valuable analytical resources. Most NSC staffers do not think about their work in these terms. The ordinary result of such an approach is that the staffer will respond off the top of the head (or off the wall) or ask for work related to what he has just completed or knows to be in his in-box. We will do ourselves more good by establishing daily dialogue.

  • Similarly, as has been done occasionally in the past, the terms of reference of major papers should be shared with the NSC to ensure that what we have in mind best meets the policy need and to obtain suggestions of additional points to be covered to be most helpful.

— The role of the DCI is central to understanding the President's needs and conveying analysis to him. Few DCIs before Admiral Turner took a sustained interest in analysis or an active role in getting substantive matters before the

President either orally or in writing. Few have been so brash as literally to hand the President published intelligence reports to read. Future DCIs must be persuaded that these undertakings are central to their role as the President's principal intelligence adviser. Moreover, the DCI should assume a similar role with the National Security Adviser—perhaps the best source of information on issues of topical interest to the President and the foreign affairs and defense agenda. Finally, the importance of routine, detailed feedback by the DCI from policy meetings, briefings and conversations with the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, the National Security Adviser and Chairman, JCS to analytical managers, NIOs and senior analysts must be impressed upon DCIs. The dearth of feedback before 1977 was damaging to our work and contributed to a sense "downtown" that we were unhelpful and unresponsive. Contrary to the views of some intelligence professionals, we cannot properly do our work in splendid isolation.

— We must exploit every opportunity to get analysis to the President. When exceptional analysis is available, an appropriate senior intelligence official should *telephone* his personal contact(s) noted above and alert him to the paper (but judiciously to preserve credibility). Meanwhile, DCI briefings, NSC meetings, intelligence contributions or annexes to policy options papers, typescript memoranda, spot reports, and all other means need to be used to get information to the Security Adviser and to the President.

— Intelligence should be unafraid to speculate on the future. Everyone else around the President does—and most are far less experienced or capable analysts than we. A preferred approach would be to alternative futures and then above all state clearly our best estimate, however we caveat it. Waffling conclusions have too long made intelligence estimates a laughingstock among policymakers. "On the one hand . . . but on the other . . . " is no help to a policymaker and clearly undermines confidence in our analytical capacity. If we have no confidence in our judgment, why should the President?

— In all but two or three cases National Intelligence Estimates as presently prepared have been ignored by the White House in recent years. They are usually too late, too formalistic, and too equivocal to be of value to senior policymakers—much less the President or his Security Adviser. This need not be so. A return to the practice of issuing brief, short-deadline special NIEs that would focus on specific policy relevant issues would mean that intelligence would be available before decisions are made—and would better serve the President and his senior advisers. It would also ensure that the intelligence assessment is not buried in long options papers which rarely reach the President anyway.

  • Such SNIEs would have to be disseminated on a restrictive basis. On important issues, the circle of policy players is kept small; the contribution of any intelligence paper will be enhanced by its limited circulation and, more importantly, by the perception by its readers of its limited high-level readership. If the President or his closest advisers make a special request of analysis, they do not like to see a response apparently published in the hundreds of copies. We are mistaken as well when we become preoccupied with format and presentation to the detriment of analytical (vice reportorial) content—a problem in the past.

— The responsibility for making intelligence more relevant, timely and helpful is that of senior officials of the Intelligence Community alone. Analysts and

managers at all levels must assume the burden of keeping better up to date on events and policy issues relevant to their area of professional concern. Such awareness must infuse all analysis from drafter to Director. Only when priority attention is given at all levels to the relevance and value of intelligence *to the consumer* from President to desk officer will intelligence analysis be better received and, in the end, be better.

The above "rules" apply to doing our work better. They will not resolve the several causes of Presidential displeasure—our support of Congress, changing assessments that have policy implications, surprises, and so forth. Even here there are some steps we can take. For example:

— We should take the initiative to let the Security Adviser or the NSC Staff know that we are preparing an estimate or other form of analysis that will revise earlier assessments and have an impact on the President's policies. This would include advance warning of new and important conclusions in military estimates

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— Intelligence needs to develop a mechanism for better informing the White House about support provided to the Congress. The intelligence agencies are part of the Executive Branch; the DCI is appointed by and reports to the President. It is not improper or inappropriate for us to keep the President's foreign affairs staff more completely and regularly advised of papers we provide the Congress, possibly controversial testimony or briefings, etc. Again, some of this has been done—but a mere schedule of planned appearances or an occasional phone call are not enough. Keeping the Executive informed about our dealings with Congress is an important aspect of building Presidential confidence that we are not trying to undercut him or his policies by responding to legitimate Congressional requests.

— Finally, it would be helpful to continue keeping the White House informed in advance when we plan to publish an unclassified substantive intelligence and to highlight possible controversial points. This will become important as pressure for such unclassified publications increases. We should acquiesce in those rare circumstances in which the Security Adviser or the President asks us not to publish certain information for public consumption. Our charter is to serve the President and, secondarily, the Congress. Once information and analysis is provided to them, our responsibility is fulfilled. Unclassified publications are indeed a public service but also, frankly, a public relations enterprise. If such a service/enterprise complicates life for the President, we should be prepared to forgo it. Only a fraction of unclassified publications would be affected—and our willingness to withhold them would help build confidence at the White House that we seek to be supportive.

Although several of the above "rules" and suggestions may be controversial, the reader should be aware that all have been pursued by CIA at one time or another and by one official or another. I wish to emphasize that *haphazard*, occasional implementation has not ameliorated the underlying suspicion and dissatisfaction of successive Presidents and their advisers with intelligence analysis or their perception that we often peddle our product to the Congress and public in a freewheeling manner designed to benefit us, regardless of the problems caused the policymaker.

Some will argue that the steps I propose would subvert the independence of the analysis process and subordinate our judgments to policy considerations. That is not so!

None implies any interference with the analyst or his judgments—except to make the latter relevant to the needs of the President and to improve the odds someone at the White House will value the analyst's work. Most are intended to allot the analyst his rightful voice in policy deliberations and to ensure that receptivity to his work is not diminished by irritation or pique resulting from controversy we have sparked on the Hill; the White House being caught unawares by analysis that undercuts policies based on earlier intelligence conclusions; or because the White House has been embarrassed by publication of unclassified analysis.

Above all, we in intelligence should appreciate the primacy of personal relationships in making government work. We have neglected to develop fully such relationships at the White House and NSC in recent years—although of course there have been exceptions. We must pursue such contacts—bearing in mind that we start all over every four or eight years and, indeed, every month as familiar faces at CIA and downtown are replaced by new. These personal contacts and a greater sensitivity to White House needs and perceptions (including of us) are essential to mitigating Presidential criticism and ensuring that the best possible intelligence product in fact reaches our "most important customer" in time to make a difference. [redacted]

[redacted]

ROUTING SLIP

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Remarks

STAT

Executive Secretary

22 JUN 88
Date

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The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

June 22, 1988

Mr. Brad Roberts
Executive Editor
The Washington Quarterly
1800 K Street, N.W., Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Mr. Roberts:

Thank you for your kind letter of June 7 inviting me to contribute an essay to the winter issue of The Washington Quarterly on intelligence policy issues. I regret that I do not see how I could find sufficient time in the next weeks to write an article of the quality that would satisfy you or me. I find your invitation most tempting and even considered updating an earlier, formerly classified article I did on the use of intelligence at the White House, but I am not convinced this would be adequate. The article has never appeared in public.

If you have some interest in a revised and updated article on my perceptions of the use of intelligence at the White House over four administrations, I would be happy to talk further with you. If not, thanks again for the invitation to contribute to The Washington Quarterly and I hope I will some day have the opportunity to make a contribution to the journal.

Regards,

STAT

Robert M. Gates

ORIG - Addressee
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DCI EXEC REG

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THE WASHINGTON QUARTERLY

Office of the Editor

June 7, 1988

Mr. Robert Gates
Deputy Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Mr. Gates:

Anne Armstrong suggested that I write you about a project of possible mutual interest.

She and I have been working together to develop a cluster of essays for the winter issue of The Washington Quarterly on intelligence policy issues. She is authoring an essay analyzing the way in which the executive branch "consumes" intelligence and offering some lessons based on her years at PFIAB. Roy Godson is authoring a complementary piece drawing together conclusions from his three-year research project on intelligence and the 1990s.

Mrs. Armstrong suggested that you might consider contributing an essay of your own to this cluster. As someone with a strong practical sense of the intelligence business as well as a broader perspective on the role of the intelligence community in the nation's business you could make an important contribution to the policy community's understanding of the issues we face in the years ahead.

I understand that there are many demands upon your time. But I hope that you might look upon this as an opportunity to distil some lessons from your experience for an important community. The Washington Quarterly is well read in senior policy circles in the executive and legislative branches; we also have subscribers in over 50 other countries. A copy of the most recent issue is enclosed for your reference.

I look forward to an opportunity to discuss this proposal with you or a member of your staff some time in the next week or so. Thank you for giving this your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brad Roberts

Brad Roberts
Executive Editor

cc:Armstrong

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